

**THE
ESTABLISHMENT
AND
EARLY DEVELOPMENT
OF BROADCASTING IN QUEENSLAND**

**A Study of
the Queensland Radio Service
1925 - 1930**

R.J. Benson

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of a B.A. (Hons) degree,

Division of Humanities, Griffith University,

Brisbane, Australia

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The following work has never previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any University. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Roderick J. Benson', with a stylized, wavy underline.

Roderick J. Benson

I am a University, right in your room.
I am an Opera sung by your fireside.
I am an orchestra to set your feet a-dancing.
I am a band to enthuse your musical soul.
I am an orator, whose eloquence holds you still.
I am a violin recital, rendered by a master at your side.
I am a statesman, conferring with you on the nation's needs.
I am a diplomat, voicing a foreign friendliness.
I am a doctor, coming to your home without charge.
I am a banker, watching your laid-away pounds.
I am a leader of industry, analysing the economic trend.
I am a newspaper, describing events as they happen.
I am a drama, played in your parlor.
I am a debate, where you hear both sides of the day's problems.
I am a football game, with thrills by the score.
I am a boxing championship, with a seat at the ringside.
I am a governess, teaching your children each day.
I am a scientist, revealing wonders that you knew not of.
All these I am, and more.
I am a patriot, kindling anew your love of country.
I am a preacher, reawakening your faith in human nature.
Yet, poor, foolish men just call me radio.

E.H. Palmer, *Daily Telegraph*, 30 September 1927

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Research for this dissertation could not have been accomplished without the help of many individuals and organisations. My thanks are due, firstly, to my supervisor, Dr Albert Moran, who suggested Queensland's early broadcasting history as a possible research topic, and who maintained a keen interest in the work as it progressed. For their help and advice I also thank Pat Kelly (ABC Archivist), Ruth Kerr (Vice-President, Royal Historical Society of Queensland), Nick Bannenberg (Queensland Parliamentary Librarian) and Bill Rohde (4QG employee, 1930-1937).

I am also grateful for the assistance of the following organisations in locating primary and secondary sources: Australian Broadcasting Corporation Document Archives, Sydney; General Post Office Museum, Brisbane; Australian Archives, Canberra; Fryer Memorial Library, University of Queensland; Griffith University Library; John Oxley Library, Brisbane; Mitchell Library, Sydney; National Library of Australia, Canberra; Queensland Parliamentary Library; Queensland State Archives; Royal Historical Society of Queensland; and the State Library of Queensland.

I am indebted to the School of Humanities at Griffith University for providing travel funds for research in Sydney and Canberra in February, and to Michelle for proof-reading the text.

Abbreviations

AA	Australian Archives (Australian Capital Territory)
ABCD A	Australian Broadcasting Corporation Documentary Archives
APRA	Australian Performing Rights Association
AWA	Amalgamated Wireless (Australasia) Limited
BB	<i>Broadcast Bulletin</i> (Brisbane)
CPD	<i>Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates</i>
JOL	John Oxley Library
LPA	Local Producers' Association
NSW	New South Wales
PMG	Postmaster-General
QPA	Queensland Producers' Association
QPD	<i>Queensland Parliamentary Debates</i>
QPP	<i>Queensland Parliamentary Papers</i>
QRN	<i>Queensland Radio News</i> (Brisbane)
QRS	Queensland Radio Service
QSA	Queensland State Archives
SMH	<i>Sydney Morning Herald</i>
W W	<i>Wireless Weekly</i> (Sydney)

Note: footnote references to QSA material refer to Premier's Department bundle numbers. For QSA bundle number references see Appendix 1.

Introduction

Broadcasting in Australia commenced in the early 1920s, under the control of the Postmaster-General's Department. The Australian Broadcasting Commission began operating in 1932, but prior to that year the industry lacked a coherent regulatory policy. Early broadcasting was characterised by a series of transformations in policy and practice. Several schemes were introduced: the first, the 'sealed set' scheme of 1923, consisted of sets permanently sealed to particular wavelengths. This scheme was a form of subscription radio, and sets were sealed to ensure that listeners did not tune in to stations to which they had not subscribed. It was replaced in 1924 by 'A' and 'B' class stations and 'open' sets. 'A' stations were high-powered and funded by licence revenue. 'B' stations were of much lower power and relied exclusively on other sources for revenue. Both classes of station used advertising. 4QG was an 'A' station developed by the Queensland State Government as a public utility.

Although there has been some general discussion of broadcasting in the 1920s (for example, Counihan 1981; Barnard 1983; Johnson 1988), no detailed discussion of individual stations exists. Such discussion would provide a means of evaluating past discussion of the period. It would also provide a foundation on which to base new research, perhaps a comparative analysis of several early Australian stations, or of 4QG and stations in Britain or Canada.

The study of 4QG presents an excellent opportunity for documenting the development of a single station. It was a popular station, discussed frequently in wireless periodicals and newspapers. It was the only Australian station to be owned and operated by a State Government. It was Queensland's only 'A' station during the 1920s. Being government-owned, the service has left records of its operations intact in public archives. Academic research into 4QG's beginnings

has never been done before. The only secondary literature relevant to the subject is a paper by Charles Porter entitled, "Broadcasting in Queensland."¹ It is a celebratory, superficial and not entirely factual account of broadcasting history in the northern state from 1921 to 1961. For example, Porter gives 1924 as the year in which broadcasting commenced at 4QG, whereas it did not commence until July 1925.

The research for this dissertation was of a historical nature, but to adequately cover archival material it was necessary to break the study into four sections covering history, programming and listeners. Chapter one describes the moves to create a new station in Queensland, the process of establishing a permanent station, and the steps taken in transferring control of 4QG to the Australian Broadcasting Company in 1930. It also details the financial history of the station. The next two stations discuss various programme genres. Chapter two covers utilitarian and educational programmes, and chapter three discusses entertainment programmes and advertising. The final chapter looks at aspects of 4QG's service in relation to listeners and licensing.

To locate primary material for the dissertation, I visited government archives in Brisbane, Sydney and Canberra, including those of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. Other sources are mentioned on page vii. Crucial to the research were contemporary copies of *Wireless Weekly* at the Mitchell Library in Sydney, the *Queensland Radio News* at the John Oxley Library in Brisbane, and the Brisbane evening newspaper, the *Telegraph*, at the Queensland Parliamentary Library.

The early history of 4QG is important for Australian broadcasting history as a whole. Counihan has recently shown that accounts of broadcasting history

¹Porter 1961-2: 750-761.

written in the 1950s and 1960s are markedly teleological in their findings. They assume that because the dual system existed when they were writing, the seeds of such a system existed in the 1910s and 1920s. His own research, and that of Barnard, effectively demonstrates that the broadcasting industry in the 1920s was more complicated and conflictual than older histories have suggested. The transformation to a dual system was neither necessary nor inevitable. This study of the Queensland Radio Service adds to the sense of heterogeneity present in radio during the 1920s that Counihan and Barnard postulate. It reinforces the notion that early events did not simply lead to the formation of a dual system in 1932. The dissertation also makes available primary research on a subject previously ignored by scholars. Finally, it shows how one station developed through a difficult period in broadcasting history, and gives evidence of the varied and comprehensive nature of an early station's service to listeners.



Monthly Office Journal of the State Government Insurance Office 8 (5), March 1926, p. 2

The State Insurance Building, corner of George and Elizabeth streets, Brisbane. Note the station on the roof.

Chapter One

History of the Queensland Radio Service

The Council of Agriculture and radio for the farmer

Amateur wireless enthusiasts participated in signal transmission and reception in Queensland from the late 1910s. However, the first official broadcasting license for the State was not granted by the Postmaster-General (PMG) until 1925. Early thinking on large-scale use of wireless technology in the northern state emanated from the Department of Agriculture's desire for swift communication between Brisbane and rural areas. Successive Queensland Labor Governments from 1915 relied on rural support for electoral success. They promised new roads, bridges and railways, which would open up the land and enable primary producers to expand their markets and improve efficiency. The introduction of broadcasting was part of this rural strategy.

The Ryan and Theodore Governments introduced a range of State Enterprises to promote industrial and economic development between 1915 and 1920. These included butchers' shops, railway refreshment rooms, a fish supply, a hotel, a fruit cannery and cattle stations. They remained in place until auctioned to the public in 1929 and 1930 by the conservative Moore government. Although broadcasting is not listed as one of these enterprises,¹ the establishment of Queensland's first official broadcasting station, 4QG, may be viewed in similar terms. Indeed, the *Brisbane Telegraph* referred to 4QG in 1924 as "the latest State

¹Fitzpatrick 1945: 24; Fitzgerald & Thornton 1989: 70

Enterprise."² Two years later the station was still discussed as a State Enterprise, and compared with other Enterprises.³

Under Theodore's leadership several initiatives were implemented to assist farmers, and in 1922 the Queensland Producers' Association (QPA) was established by an Act of Parliament. The QPA consisted of several hundred Local Producers' Associations (LPAs) which elected members to District Councils; these were represented on a statewide Council of Agriculture under the jurisdiction of the Secretary for agriculture and stock.⁴ L.R. Macgregor, Director of the Council, foresaw that significant benefits could be gained by educating primary producers through wireless telephony. In February 1924 he informed Acting Premier W.N. Gillies that the QPA had made overtures to Amalgamated Wireless (Australasia) Ltd (AWA) regarding joint establishment of radiotelephony in Queensland.⁵ In April Macgregor submitted a report on the wireless movement to the Council of Agriculture and urged the Government to secure a wireless monopoly in Queensland from the PMG.⁶

Desiring to follow British and (especially) United States models of broadcasting, Macgregor lobbied Gillies to introduce a wireless service for farmers. He made two suggestions: firstly, that AWA erect a station in Brisbane and lease it to the Council at £3500 per annum; or secondly, that the Council build its own station for approximately £5000. The service would provide utilitarian information, entertainment, and political

² *Telegraph*, 17 Dec. 1924, p. 4.

³ *QPD*, Vol. 148, 1926, pp. 1141, 1142.

⁴ Fitzgerald 1984: 59

⁵ Letter, 11 Feb. 1924, QSA 82/1

⁶ 'Wireless in Queensland: History of the Movement,' undated, QSA 81/14

content in the form of speeches. LPA members would assemble at night to hear Gillies or another prominent person in the QPA movement "address the assembled Associations throughout the entire state," with anticipated coverage extending to Cairns.⁷ Gillies had spoken on an amateur station earlier that month, and as R.R. Walker remarks, he saw wireless transmissions as a key factor in Labor's policy of ending the isolation of rural communities.⁸ Gillies probably realised radio's potential for the ideological control of people outside the state's major population centres. Consequent to Macgregor's suggestion, the Queensland Crown Solicitor conferred with Jim Malone, the Commonwealth Wireless Expert, who suggested that AWA's estimates were exaggerated and that the Government delay a decision until the outcome of the impending Wireless Conference was known.⁹ The Conference resolved to abolish 'sealed' receiving sets and replace them with 'open' sets.

Even at this early stage, questionable business practices and profiteering from a market monopoly had sufficiently damaged AWA's reputation that the Government refused Macgregor's first suggestion and began discussing his second.¹⁰ On 4 June 1924 the Council of Agriculture requested that the State Government finance the establishment of a broadcasting station, offering to pay £1000 per annum in return for use of the station for two hours each day.¹¹ The PMG had initially allocated two 'A' class stations to Queensland,¹² possibly because both Sydney and

⁷Letter, 26 Feb. 1924, QSA 82/1

⁸Walker 1973: 23

⁹Letter from Crown Solicitor to Gillies, 20 Mar. 1924, QSA 96/6

¹⁰See Counihan 1981: 11. The 1927 Royal Commission on Wireless *Report* described AWA as "oppressive," "high-handed" and "overbearing"; AWA's Western Australian selling agent called the company "the worst hated firm in Australia."

¹¹Letter, 4 Jun. 1924, QSA 82/1

¹²'Alterations to Existing Wireless Regulations,' 8 Apr. 1924, AA A/458/1 A/224/1

Mebourne had two. This was reduced to one by mid-1924 because Queensland's population was deemed too low for two stations to be economically viable, and the PMG welcomed Government ownership. Gillies wrote to Theodore (who was away in London) in August explaining the application procedure, adding that

the Government is quite justified with securing a monopoly of this Licence, and the indications are that it will be a paying concern after it is properly established and understood.¹³

Cabinet approved the move and placed the station within the Chief Secretary's Department. Special legislation to establish the station was thought unnecessary: the Primary Producers' Organisation Act¹⁴ gave authority for the dissemination of instruction and market prices to farmers, and the station was to fulfil that role. The Act also permitted the Council to finance the station.

Unlike the proposed Government station, experimental and amateur stations did not operate in an organised fashion in Queensland. The daily press had hailed early transmission attempts, but when the 4QG proposal was released the private experimenters receded into the background in terms of press publicity. For example, the *Telegraph* reported in December 1924 that

definite arrangements will be made for the establishment of radiocasting in Brisbane ... [at] Preston House ... The Radio Society of Queensland continues its weekly experimental transmission from its station at the Trades Hall, giving a good deal of pleasure to listeners.¹⁵

¹³Letter, 6 Aug. 1924, QSA 80/6

¹⁴Section 6, subsections 4, 8, 11 & 15.

¹⁵*Telegraph*, 3 Dec. 1924, p. 3.

Incidentally, this "pleasure" was gained not through hearing what was actually said, but simply through the act of receiving distant voices and music. Enjoyment was derived from the technology itself, not from the content of transmissions.¹⁶ Two weeks later the *Telegraph* announced the imminent appointment of J.W. Robinson as manager of the new station, and 4QG swiftly became the centre of the wireless movement in Queensland, despite the pessimism voiced in the article: "there may be a long delay before the station is erected, if at all."¹⁷

Robinson,¹⁸ previously Assistant Manager of Sydney's 2FC, was appointed to the position of Manager of the Queensland Radio Service (QRS) on 1 January 1925. He was later given the title 'Director,' in keeping with heads of other State Government sub-departments. The QRS was the public service body set up to administer 4QG. In a personal report to Gillies prior to his appointment, Robinson praised the State Government for its commitment to public utility broadcasting and stressed that the benefits of wireless communication "should be placed within easy reach of the rich and poor alike ... broadcasting services being controlled by the people and for the people."¹⁹ At this time, the Government did not only intend to control its own station; it planned to open retail outlets for the sale of receiving apparatus, and implement a Community Radio Scheme. These plans will be discussed in chapter four. Robinson had disapproved of the intrusion of private interests at 2FC (owned and operated by Farmer and Company, a Sydney department store), and saw the notion of public utility broadcasting as the solution to such problems. He was optimistic at 4QG's prospects: the Government

¹⁶Counihan 1981: 196; Williams 1974: 25.

¹⁷*Telegraph*, 17 Dec. 1924, p. 4.

¹⁸See Appendix 4.

¹⁹'Wireless Broadcasting,' undated, QSA 80/6

had given him sole control and "an absolutely free hand,"²⁰ extending to relatively generous financial arrangements.

From its conception 4QG placed special importance on agriculture and rural education. The *Telegraph* claimed in January 1925 that

the Government is not so much concerned with providing a service for city people as it is with reaching the man on the land ... If the culture of the city can be taken to the man in the backblocks by means of wireless, it is going to be of inestimable value to the State.²¹

Robinson's early plans for the station included the distribution of agricultural, forestry and weather news, the instruction of young rural citizens, and "the informing of the whole of Australia of the wonderful tourist claims of the Government."²² The latter suggestion was never systematically pursued. He closed his personal report restating his belief that the only effective way to organise Australian broadcasting was through direct government control.

Robinson defined two problems associated with privately-owned stations. They fell prey to vested commercial interests, and tended to form monopolies in the state in which they operated. The PMG's decision to allocate only one broadcasting licence to Queensland prompted Robinson to push for its control by the State government, thus preventing private interests from ownership of that state's broadcasting industry. In a letter to Gillies, the Prime Minister stated that the PMG had approved the granting of an 'A' class licence to the Council of Agriculture "for the State of Queensland," implying that no other 'A'

²⁰Letter from Robinson to Malone, 4 Feb. 1925, QSA 83/9

²¹*Telegraph*, 7 Jan. 1925, p. 4.

²²'Wireless Broadcasting,' *op. cit.*

class licences would be approved there.²³ The *Brisbane Worker* had mistakenly seen the PMG's decision as a federally-engineered monopoly plan for a private company,²⁴ but the owner of the licence was to be the state Labor government. Later, however, the *Worker* aligned itself with Labor's initiative to establish 4QG. It ridiculed all other 'A' stations and the federal Bruce Government for "showing the cloven hoof of capitalist exploitation" and called on voters to end private ownership of broadcasting facilities.²⁵

Government ownership of Queensland's sole 'A' class licence would prevent proprietary interests from operating powerful broadcasting stations in Queensland and secure a monopoly for public utility broadcasting. While it may seem that the federal government fully supported Queensland's push for public broadcasting, this was not the case. A state government report suggests that the Labor party was forced into deliberate action to prevent a private enterprise broadcasting monopoly in Queensland. The report states that

[t]he Queensland Government, while unable to interfere with the action of the Federal authorities in thus granting wireless monopolies to private individuals, was able to exercise some sort of restraint as far as Queensland was concerned. The Labour party quite early decided that wireless in Queensland should not be a monopoly controlled by private enterprise, and in order to give effect to its decision it immediately applied for, and was granted, the only 'A' grade licence allowed to Queensland ... it is only morally right that [broadcasting] should be wholly and solely a public utility.²⁶

E.R. Voigt was an activist of the Sydney Labor Research Bureau who set up 2KY for the New South Wales Trades and Labour Council.²⁷

²³Letter, 28 July 1924, QSA 83/13

²⁴*Worker*, 3 July 1924, p. 15.

²⁵*Worker*, 22 Oct. 1925.

²⁶'State Wireless,' undated and anonymous report, p. 2, QSA 82/4

²⁷On Voigt see Johnson 1988: 25-37.

He suggested to Gillies that the individual State Governments, independent of the Commonwealth Government, should meet to develop a network of government broadcasting stations. He proposed using the stations for departmental and interdepartmental communication and for union activities. The Labor Party was in government in most states, but federally it was in opposition. According to Gillies, Voigt agreed that Labor had "done the right thing so far in Queensland,"²⁸ although Lesley Johnson suggests that Voigt criticised the 'A' class licence application because "it committed [the Labor government] to the operation of an orthodox station as defined by the PMG's regulations."²⁹ As a result of Macgregor's initial suggestion, Queensland received its first licenced broadcasting station, one that would prove to be the only state government-owned public utility station in Australia.

Establishing the temporary station

When a journalist approached Robinson in 1925 and asked what was required to launch a new broadcasting station, he replied, "I don't think there is very much to tell. We decided to establish a station and then went right ahead and did it - that is all."³⁰ This was essentially true, but in the process of establishing 4QG, Robinson and his staff had to overcome many problems and at times worked through the night to meet construction and opening date deadlines.

²⁸Letter from Gillies to Robinson, 17 August 1925, QSA 82/4.

²⁹Johnson 1988: 34.

³⁰*QRN*, 1 Sep. 1925, p. 7.

Three major decisions were required before broadcasting could commence: what wavelength should be secured from the PMG, what was the best site for a station, and who should supply the transmitting apparatus. Robinson recommended a wavelength of between 375 and 425 metres (385 metres was allotted), for two reasons. Firstly, he believed through experience that a shorter wavelength permitted more efficient long-distance communication (crucial to Queensland's rural listeners) and created less static. Secondly, a shorter wavelength apparently enabled cheaper receivers to be installed, also to the advantage of struggling country people.³¹ Robinson added that commercial stations used higher wavelengths because their parent companies wished to corner the market for certain types of receiver, which they sold. Alan Barnard notes that in 1922 AWA applied to broadcast on a wavelength of between 1050 and 1450 metres, "thus eliminating potential competition from mass-produced American sets ... Even if monopoly were to last only a short time, AWA would benefit considerably."³² This was still the case in 1925, and until 1928 broadcasting policy in Australia was largely dictated by commercial pressures.

Two suitable sites in Brisbane were found: The Domain and the State Insurance Building. Robinson chose the latter because it was one of the city's tallest buildings, its flat roof could house both the necessary aerial masts and a studio complex, and it contained an elevator.³³ It was situated on the corner of George and Elizabeth Streets (presently the Family Services Building). Construction commenced immediately, the state Public Works Department carrying out the work.³⁴

³¹ 'Establishment of Broadcasting Station Report,' undated, p. 1, QSA 81/14.

³² Barnard 1983: 103.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

³⁴ Department of Works *Annual Report*, for year ended 30 June 1925, p. 3.

Form 4

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

POSTMASTER-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT.

24 6.

Wireless Telegraphy Act 1905-1919.

BROADCASTING STATION LICENCE.

IN pursuance and exercise of the powers and authority conferred upon the Postmaster-General by clause 5 of the *Wireless Telegraphy Act 1905-1919*, and by the *Wireless Telegraphy Regulations*,

(Name) State Government of Queensland.(Address) BRISBANE.

are/is hereby licensed to erect a Broadcasting Station at BRISBANE,
and to operate the said Station for a period of five years from the date hereof.

The installation and operation of the said Station shall be carried out in accordance with the provisions of the said Regulations and such amendments and additions thereto as are made from time to time.

SIGNED, sealed, and delivered by the Minister
or member of the Executive Council for
the time being administering the *Wireless
Telegraphy Act 1905-1919*.

H. J. Gibson
30:1:1925.

This Licence is accepted by me under the conditions above set out.

SIGNED, sealed, and delivered by the said
Licensee in the presence of—

G. Watson

W. N. Gillies
Acting Premier of Queensland.

SCHEDULE OF THE AUTHORIZED STATION.

1. No. of licence 6. Expires 29:1:1930.
2. Name of licensee State Government of Queensland.
3. Location of station Queensland State Insurance Bldg., C/r George & Elizabeth
Sta., Brisbane.
4. Type of transmitter described below power 5000 watts
5. Type of receiver Valve.
6. Operating wave-length 385 metres. Call sign 4QG.
7. Circuit diagram of transmitter and receiver.— Diagram attached

Type of transmitter: Valve: Master Oscillator. Modulation
constant current.

(QSA 96/6)

AWA was contracted to supply the transmitter, aerial system, amplifier, microphones and batteries at an estimated cost of £7755.³⁵ The transmitter would have a power of 5000 watts, equal to any other station in Australia and giving it an effective range of about 500 miles by day and 1000 miles by night.³⁶ Voigt was forced to set up 2KY using mostly non-AWA equipment because AWA was not in favour of the establishment of a Labor station. Robinson realised the necessity of dealing delicately with the company; he had minor difficulties, but nothing comparable to those of Voigt. AWA did, arguably, provide the best range of broadcasting equipment and employed Australia's most highly-skilled radio engineers, so it was in Robinson's best interests to deal with them.

When the PMG officially granted a broadcasting licence to the Queensland Government on 30 January 1925, one stipulation was that the station must commence broadcasting within six months (that is, by 31 July). *Wireless Weekly* announced that the station hoped to be completed for the coming winter,³⁷ adding that it would be a replica of 2FC, 3LO and 6WF, all constructed by AWA. Robinson urged the Public Works Department to speed construction, because it was imperative that broadcasting commence during the winter months. The Department informed Robinson that the station could not hope to be operable before December 1925. He responded saying that such an opening date would be "quite fatal to the success of broadcasting in Queensland."³⁸ Summer ushered in a period of "bad static" which interfered with broadcasts, but mid-year atmospheric conditions were ideal for "perfect transmission"³⁹

³⁵'Establishment ... Report,' *op. cit.*, p. 1.

³⁶*WW*, 30 Jan. 1925, p. 21.

³⁷*WW*, 23 Jan. 1925, p. 28.

³⁸'Broadcasting station,' undated report, QSA 83/19

³⁹*Ibid.*

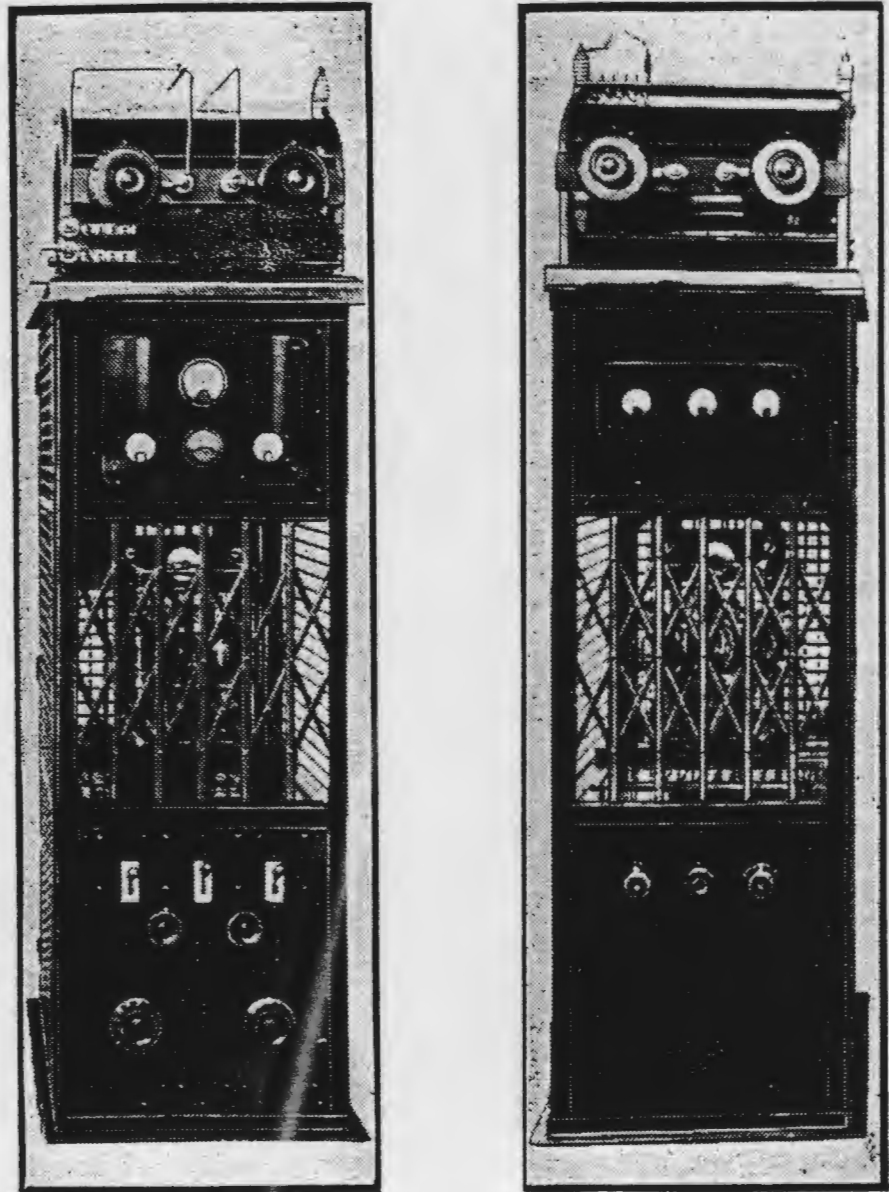
If the opening date was delayed for too long, unappreciative listeners would voice their criticism at the Government for two reasons. Firstly, while they paid a licence fee to the PMG, crystal sets (by far the most common and inexpensive) received interstate broadcasts with great difficulty. Listeners had to derive their pleasure from whatever wireless amateurs happened to be transmitting, and this perceived unfairness created discontent. Secondly, listeners would complain at the vast capital outlay provided by the Government to the QRS from their taxes.

The official reason for the establishment of a temporary station was, however, "to prevent many wireless enthusiasts [i.e. amateurs] being disappointed" at not having a new, strong signal to which they could tune their apparatus.⁴⁰ These considerations led Robinson to request the erection of a temporary station in the State Government Executive Building, using a 500-watt transmitter (acquired for future use in a regional relay station - see chapter four). Masts were installed on the roof, a room on the second floor became the studio and offices, and a shed in the courtyard housed the transmitting equipment.⁴¹ A problem in connecting the station to the city's electricity supply was solved when Professor Hawkins and Dr Boyd of the University of Queensland provided Robinson with a rotary converter.⁴² Robinson was not worried that the PMG would suspend 4QG's licence if broadcasting did not commence by the deadline. The urgency was financial and political: if he met the PMG's requirements the station could begin to collect the licence fee revenue allotted to Queensland, amounting to an estimated £2500 to £3000 per annum, which until then had been shared between stations

⁴⁰ *WW*, 17 Jul. 1925, p. 14.

⁴¹ Unofficial QRS First Annual Report, 30 June 1926, p. 2, QSA PRE/A884

⁴² *QRN*, 1 Sep. 1925, p. 7.



Part of 4QG's low power transmitter.

operating interstate.⁴³ Queensland listeners expected the station to be functioning by the publicised deadline, and Robinson clearly did not want the station to cause the government any unwelcome criticism from voters.

Although individual stations were not directly connected with each other through ownership or association when 4QG opened, they evoked a sense of unity in the community. Like shipping ports, post offices and aerodromes, early broadcasting stations were adopted as part of the essential machinery of modern society. Postal services, newspapers and the telegraph had developed 'networks' across Australia. Radio would do the same, dissolving the 'tyranny of distance' that enveloped the continent and its white inhabitants. When 4QG opened, the *Telegraph* noted that "the last link in the chain of broadcasting stations throughout Australia was established ... Broadcasting stations are now operating in all the capital cities of the Commonwealth."⁴⁴

So it was that official broadcasting in Queensland commenced on Monday night, 26 July 1925. The first evening's programme consisted of speeches by the Premier (Gillies) and others, and a musical concert, which was well organised. One unforeseen problem arose during the broadcast, though: the pronounced hum of the generator somewhat marred the transmission of the speeches and concert.⁴⁵ The station's low power of 500 watts rendered it "hopelessly inadequate to serve even Southern Queensland efficiently,"⁴⁶ but it was a start. By September Robinson could say that "the temporary station is working very well ... and we are

⁴³Report to Under Secretary, undated, p. 3, QSA 81/8.

⁴⁴*Telegraph*, 28 Jul. 1925, p. 4.

⁴⁵*QRN*, 1 Sep. 1925, p. 11.

⁴⁶*QRN*, 1 Sep. 1925, p. 5.

looking forward to the next job - the starting of Big 4QG."⁴⁷ Robinson later gauged the success of the temporary station by the fact that over 8000 licences were taken out by Queensland listeners in the first six months of 4QG's broadcasts.⁴⁸

'Big 4QG' commences operation

Throughout the operational life of the temporary station, the permanent station was nearing completion. Community interest increased and became intense as the delay in opening continued. The *Queensland Radio News* noted that country residents and metropolitan crystal set owners in particular wished to know when the QRS planned to open its new station.⁴⁹ These were often listeners (or prospective listeners) who could not pick up interstate broadcasts or 4QG on its low power, and whose means prevented them from purchasing the more expensive valve sets.

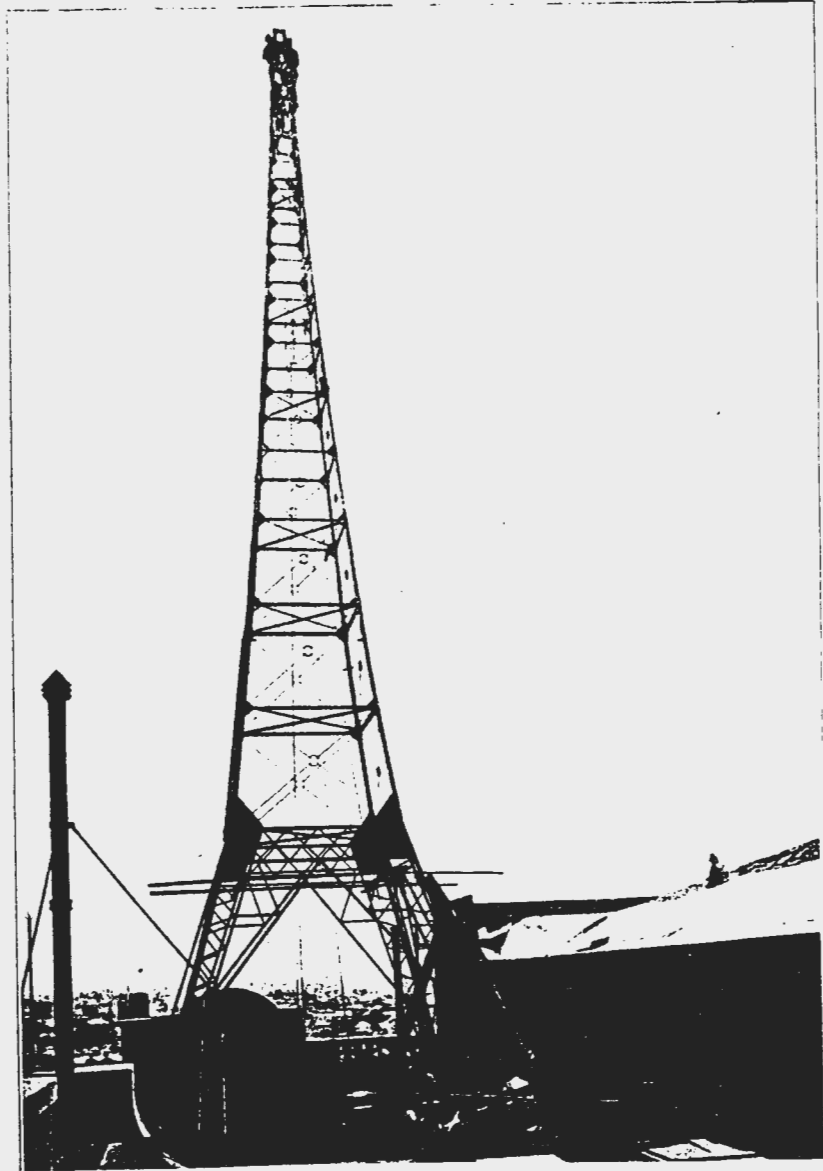
Affectionately known as 'Big 4QG,' the permanent station was conceived on an ambitious and opulent scale. Gillies said in early July 1925 that his Government was "establishing wireless broadcasting in Queensland on a large and thorough scale and has spared no pains whatever, to make its broadcasting station, 4QG, the most modern and best equipped in the Commonwealth."⁵⁰ Plans for the broadcasting complex, devised by Robinson, included administrative offices, a reception hall, two studios, an instrument room, laboratories, workshops

⁴⁷ *QRN*, 1 Sep. 1925, p. 8.

⁴⁸ General, 'report on 'B' station proposal, late 1928/early 1929, p. 3, QSA 82/7.

⁴⁹ *QRN*, 1 Mar. 1926, p. 10.

⁵⁰ *Telegraph*, 1 July 1925, p. 4.



Robinson 1926: 41

One of the towers supporting the aerial at 4QG, under construction.

and a motor and fan room. The instrument room housed all transmitting equipment, and ran the full length of the building. This housed a speech amplifying panel, sub-modulator, modulator, rectifier, main oscillator unit, master oscillator and inductances.⁵¹ Large glass windows gave the engineer on duty a full clear view of both studios.⁵² An important innovation was the location of station and studios on the same site, considerably lowering construction costs, saving money in staff salaries once the station was operating, and resulting in a more efficient service.⁵³ Perth's 6WF (Westralian Farmers) used a single site in 1926.⁵⁴

4QG's offices and reception halls were designed in the shape of a double cross, measuring 56 feet square at its widest points.⁵⁵ The hall, designed to accomodate waiting artists and speakers was capped by a large dome supported by eight fluted pillars.⁵⁶ Panelled with Queensland timbers, the rooms well furnished, and studios were fitted with adjustable draping to permit maximum sound damping during live broadcasts. The larger studio was used for band, choir and ensemble broadcasts, the smaller for solo and lecturette items.⁵⁷ For the aerial system, two four-legged steel lattice towers were positioned at diagonally opposite corners of the State Insurance Office building's roof. Each was 100 feet high, making the aerial 220 feet above street level. The aerial was an adjustable system of wires hung between the two towers. The towers were a landmark for many miles around.

⁵¹Robinson & Williams 1926: 109.

⁵²*Monthly Office Journal of the State Government Insurance Office of Queensland*, 8 (5), March 1926, p. 4.

⁵³'Broadcasting Station,' undated report, QSA 83/19. According to this report, in doing this the QRS could expect to save about £1500 per annum in salaries, compared with salaries paid by Farmers (2FC) or the Broadcasting Company Pty Ltd (2BL).

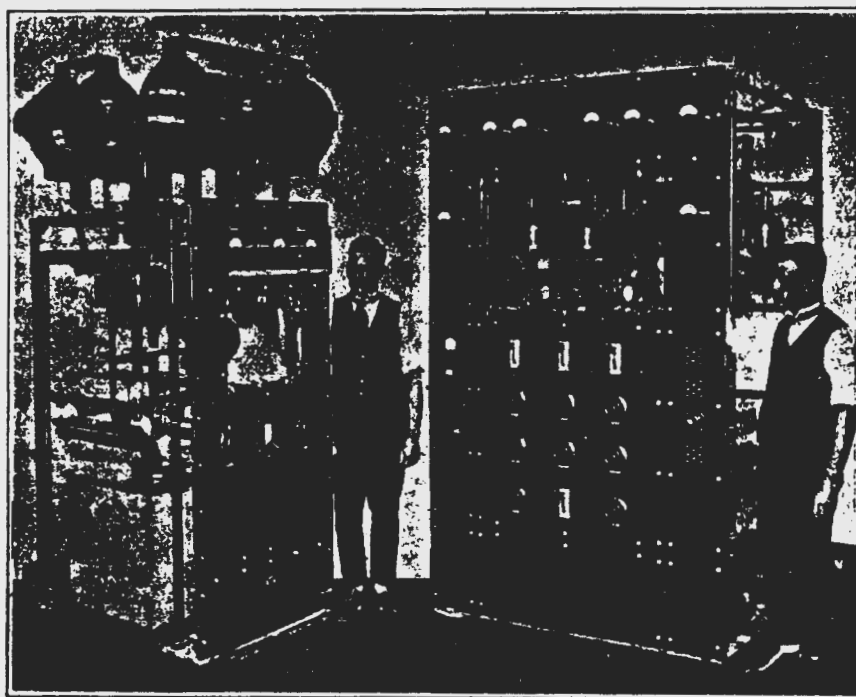
⁵⁴Robinson & Williams 1926: 103.

⁵⁵*Op. cit.*: 108.

⁵⁶*WW*, 17 July 1925, p. 13.; 10 Sept. 1926.

⁵⁷*QRN*, 1 Feb. 1927, p. 7.

Commenting on the station a week before its official opening, the *Worker* described it as "what is considered ... by outside experts, to be the most modern station in the Southern Hemisphere."⁵⁸ Indeed, a year later 4QG expressed the same claim.⁵⁹ Despite this, however, when the station began test broadcasts in April 1926 from the 5000 watt transmitter, it encountered a significant difficulty. Signals managed to reach "the uttermost corners of Australasia" with ease, but listeners within a 20-mile radius of the transmitter were unable to pick up anything except 4QG.⁶⁰ The station effectively jammed other wavelengths and people who regularly received interstate stations expressed anger at their inability to hear their favourite programmes. The situation had not changed by October 1926, but it only affected a small number of the station's total listeners.⁶¹



Robinson & Williams 1926: 110

Main oscillator unit and master oscillator, at the permanent station.

⁵⁸ *Worker*, 15 Apr. 1926, p. 13 (quoted from Premier McCormack's policy speech, Hibernian Hall, Cairns).

⁵⁹ *QRN*, 1 Apr. 1927, p. 38.

⁶⁰ *QRN*, 1 April 1926, p. 5.

⁶¹ *QPD*, Vol. 148, 1926, p. 1141.

Full programming services commenced from the new facilities on Monday 19 April 1926, and the station was officially opened at 3.00 p.m. on 22 April. Although finishing touches remained to be completed, a large number of guests (mostly Cabinet ministers, their wives and friends) gathered in the reception room for Premier William McCormack's speech. The station broadcast the event. McCormack explained that 4QG had been established for the use of all Queenslanders, adding simply that "it was a right thing that it should be controlled by the central authority."⁶² He observed that all broadcasting equipment had been designed and manufactured in Australia, with the exception of about £1000 worth. He also suggested that the nation should be proud that in such a new and rapidly developing science as radio, local engineers displayed the same competence and skill as their overseas counterparts.⁶³

Financing the enterprise

The total capital cost of setting up 4QG was £33,552. Up to June 1926 the total cost was £26,633, with an average maintenance cost for the three months ending 30 June of £280 per week.⁶⁴ This cost (that is, £26,633) included the building, towers, transmitting equipment, furnishings, fittings, special power feeds, installation of outside lines and portable broadcasting apparatus.⁶⁵ The towers, transmitter and built-in equipment cost a total of £14,772.18.0.⁶⁶ The State Government provided

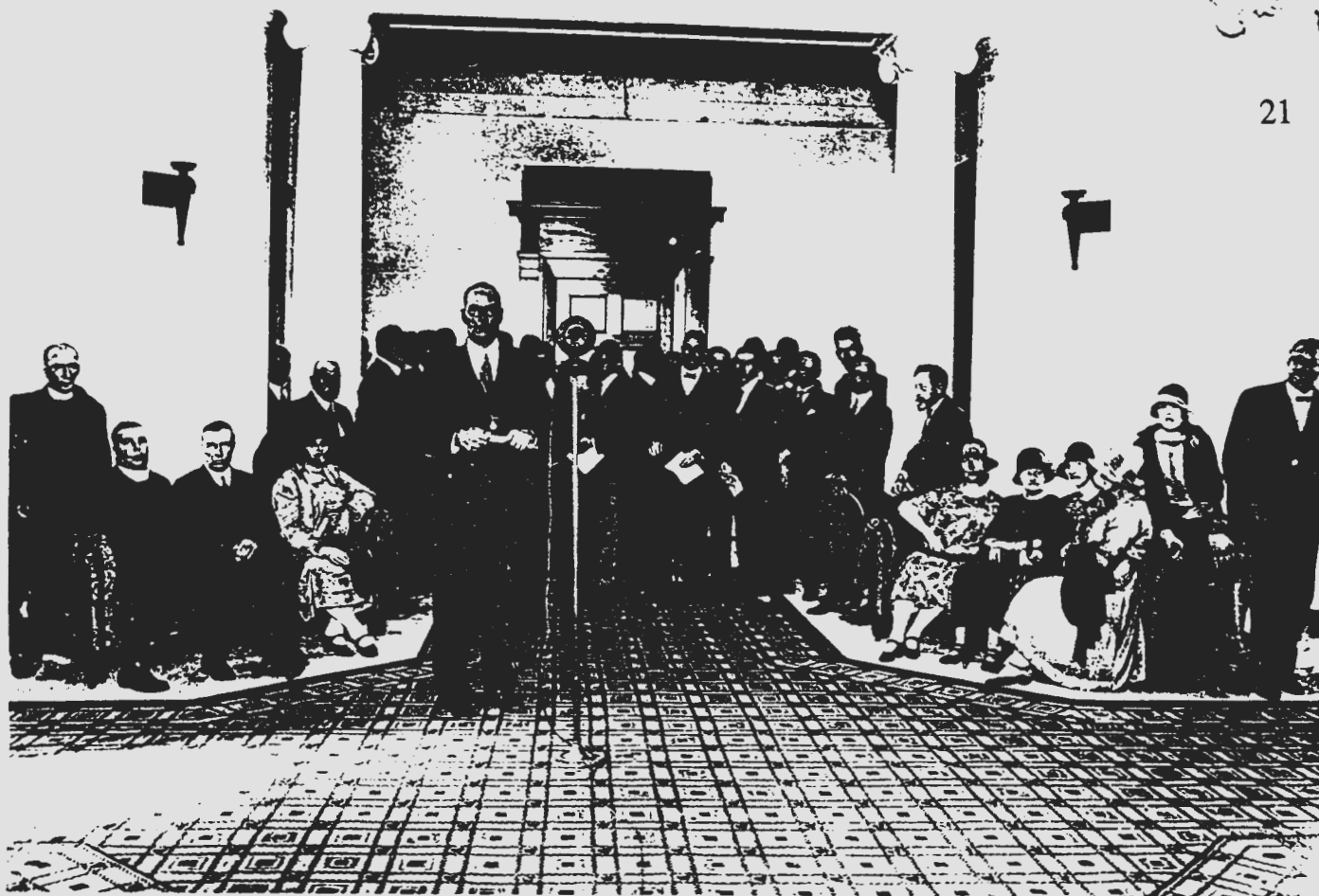
⁶² *WW*, 7 May 1926, p. 15.

⁶³ *Worker*, 28 April 1926, p. 2.

⁶⁴ *QPD*, Vol. 148, 1926, p. 328.

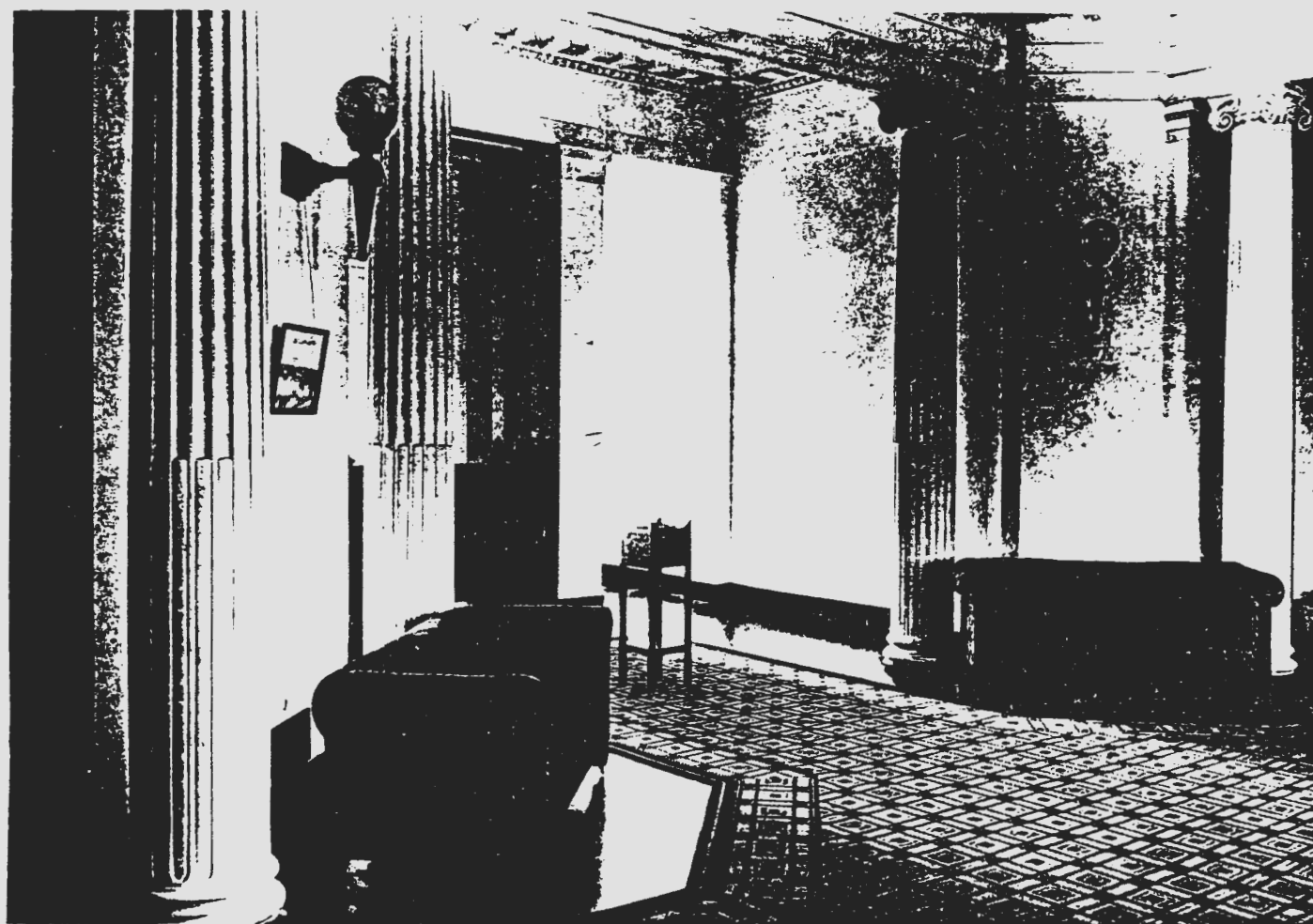
⁶⁵ Unofficial First Annual Report, p. 3, QSA PRE/A884.

⁶⁶ Auditor-General's Report, QPP, Vol. 1, 1930, p. 91.



Collection: John Oxley Library, Brisbane

Premier W. McCormack officially opening 4QG on 22 April 1926.



4QG's reception hall, 1926.

Collection: John Oxley Library, Brisbane

the capital to the QRS as a loan with interest charged at 5.5% per annum.⁶⁷ Robinson assured the Government that the station could expect to make a considerable profit when established, despite the necessary interest payments. While it did prove profitable, heavy increases in royalties and copyright fees took away much of the surplus revenue.

Revenue came largely from sale of air time to commercial advertisers and organisations such as the Council of Agriculture, which produced market reports. Advertising is discussed in chapter three. In October 1925 the Council made an agreement with the QRS to pay £1000 per annum in return for exclusive use of 4QG for issuing daily market reports.⁶⁸ Robinson handled all financial arrangements by the quarter, but while the station was operating he charged the Council only £125 per quarter. This was due to the weaker signal strength which worked against country listeners and the Council's aims.

Running costs for the station are set out in the table below:⁶⁹

TABLE 1.1: 4QG running costs, June 1925 - June 1929

Description	June 1926 (£)	June 1927 (£)	June 1928 (£)	June 1929 (£)
EXPENDITURE				
Salaries	2871.16.0	4383.14.1	4864.0	5389.0
Incidentals	1425.2.6	4097.0	1328.0	2925.0
Artist's fees	3310.2.10	4654.17.1	5799.0	7344.0
Royalties	2670.5.3	6887.18.1	2566.0	—
Maintenance	—	1447.6.9	3431.0	3124.0

⁶⁷Evidence: Royal Commission on Wireless," p. 8, submitted by Robinson, QSA 84/5

⁶⁸Letter from Robinson to Macgregor, 22 Oct. 1925, QSA 80/6.

⁶⁹Figures are taken from QRS Annual Reports for the relevant years.

Copyright	—	—	845.0	1983.0
Interest	—	—	1471.0	1240.0
Profit	729.18.0	5334.14.6	3310.0	5211.0
TOTAL:	11,007.14.7	23,802.10.6	23,614.0	27,216.0
REVENUE				
Licence fees	10,147.15.0	21,066.15.2	21,555.0	23,276.0
Advertising	820.5.0	1952.6.10	85.0	1854.0
Miscellaneous	39.14.0	783.8.6	1974.0	2086.0
TOTAL:	11,007.14.7	23,802.10.6	23,614.0	27,216.0

TABLE 1.2: 4QG plant expenditure:⁷⁰

YEAR	AMOUNT (£)
1925-26	20,040.0
1926-27	1,700.0
1927-28	160.0 ⁷¹
1928-29	?

In his evidence submitted to the 1927 Royal Commission on Wireless, Robinson explained that 4QG was not in a financially precarious position, unlike most other stations in Australia. He pointed out that the station was fully self-supporting and still able to supply a service of good quality to listeners. However, he urged the PMG to allocate to 4QG a percentage of the license fee revenue from northern New South Wales.⁷² This was because northern NSW listeners were geographically closer to 4QG than any southern stations, and many developed a loyalty to it. The suggestion was difficult to implement and unfortunately was not pursued.

⁷⁰QPP Estimates of Expenditure, Chief Secretary's Department

⁷¹Plus maintenance of £2950.0.

⁷²QRN, 1 Nov. 1927, p. 47.

From Table 1.2 above we can identify several trends. Between June 1926 and June 1927 the station as a whole rapidly expanded. This was its most successful period. From mid-1927 to early 1929 the station expanded a little: licenses increased marginally and advertising revenue increased considerably. However the aberration in advertising revenue for 1927-28 is difficult to explain. From June 1929 to January 1930 there was little change in circumstances. The station's absorption into the Australian Broadcasting Company coincided with the onset of the economic depression. While this had a negative effect in some respects (for example, there was an initial downturn in receiving set purchases) people found radio to be an inexpensive and convenient form of home entertainment. This will be elaborated upon in chapter four.

When 4QG was taken over in January 1930, the State Government received £9101.11.3 for the value of the station and equipment. For the entire period of QRS's administration of 4QG, a statement of receipts and expenditure is set out below:⁷³

TABLE 1.3: 4QG receipts and expenditure, 1924-5 to 1929-30.

Year	Receipts (£)	Expenditure (£)
1924-25	—	4240.6.5
1925-26	6018.4.11	32,012.0.6
1926-27	25,346.14.0	24,128.15.10
1927-28	21,119.8.5	20,462.14.5
1928-29	30,507.7.10	22,005.0.11

⁷³Auditor-General's Report, *QPP* Vol 1, 1930, p. 91.

1929-30	25,781.17.9	13,927.6.4
Trading account, 1925-26 to 1927-28	738.10.5	978.14.1
TOTAL	109,590.9.1	117,754.18.6

These figures show that the station (or, the State Enterprise) made a loss of £8164.9.5. However if the capital cost of permanent buildings to the State Insurance Building is deleted from expenditure, the station shows a profit from January 1925 to January 1930 of £6997.16.6.

Transfer to the Australian Broadcasting Company

From its official opening in April 1926 to the end of the decade 4QG experienced little change in operation and administration. In January 1929, both Robinson and Stevens were asked their opinion of 4QG's performance during the previous year. Robinson said that 1928 was "a year of progress in all directions ... it comprised the period during which the flush of excitement over the introduction of radio passed."⁷⁴ Stevens summed up by saying that "very little improvement has been effected," meaning that no technical innovations were introduced.⁷⁵ The most significant changes occurred in programmes, and are discussed in chapters two and three. However, at the national level the PMG was implementing a new broadcasting policy that would fundamentally transform the fledgling industry within a few short years.

⁷⁴ *Telegraph*, 2 Jan. 1929, p. 7.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

4QG was set up under the 'A' and 'B' class scheme of 1924. While an improvement on the sealed set scheme, it became an object of criticism and conflict as some stations made exorbitant profits while others suffered enormous losses. The 1924 scheme, although seemingly successful in terms of an increase in listeners' licences (from 38,000 in June 1925 to 310,000 in July 1929⁷⁶), was unsatisfactory in several respects. The system favoured smaller States with large, concentrated populations. Problems also emerged with the distribution of revenue from licenses. In January 1927 the Federal Government set up a Royal Commission to investigate various aspects of broadcasting. In October the same year the Prime Minister, S.M. Bruce, called a conference of all the 'A' class stations to discuss their future in general, although delegates were preoccupied with a discussion of financial matters. The conference achieved little and in July 1928 the Commonwealth Government officially decided to introduce a new scheme, the National Broadcasting Service.⁷⁷ Ann Moyal notes that

[b]y mid-1928 the concept of a national broadcasting service had taken root ... In July 1928 Prime Minister Stanley Bruce appointed an advisory committee on broadcasting to give expert advice to the Government. Its chairman was H.P. Brown [and] the committee recommended that control of all broadcasting activities should be vested in the Postmaster-General.⁷⁸

Under this scheme, the PMG's Department would provide all technical and transmission facilities, while programmes would be provided by a commercial organization to be appointed by tender. The successful tenderer was the Australian Broadcasting Company, formed by Sir Benjamin Fuller (Fuller's Theatres Ltd), Stuart Doyle (Union Theatres Ltd), and Frank Albert (J. Albert and Son, music publishers and sellers).⁷⁹

⁷⁶ABC Yearbook 1930, p. 12.

⁷⁷Ibid, 13.

⁷⁸Moyal 1984: 138, 139.

⁷⁹For a brief explanation of their backgrounds, see WW, 21 June 1929, 5, 6.

The Company provided programme services for the various stations as they were progressively acquired by the PMG's Department. Music was the Company's staple content: Fuller's theatres and Doyle's Cinemas provided numerous musicians, and Albert's provided sheet music, scores and gramophone records.⁸⁰ Major changes were foreshadowed, and the new policy was hailed as a "new era in broadcasting."⁸¹ The QRS passed into the hands of the Australian Broadcasting Company on 30 January 1930, but several problems and much negotiation preceded this event.

While the introduction of a national service was officially suggested in mid-1928, dialogue between the PMG and stations on the subject began soon after the Royal Commission closed in 1927. Heads of all 'A' stations were advised to co-ordinate activities and provide a better service to the public. Formulating details of a satisfactory way of achieving this was left to individual stations, but according to Robinson the PMG issued press statements early in 1928, requesting amalgamation and threatening that licences would not be renewed unless this took place.⁸²

Robinson was aware of the merger of 2FC and 2BL, and of impending mergers of all other 'A' stations. He voiced concern that 4QG would be taken over by a private monopoly. However, he agreed that co-ordination of stations' programming and resources was in the public interest, conceding that "the manner in which broadcasting may best be conducted as a public utility is open for discussion."⁸³ He suggested that

⁸⁰Inglis 1983: 13.

⁸¹WW, 12 July 1929, p. 9.

⁸²Letter to Under Secretary, Chief Secretary's Department, Brisbane, 19 Mar. 1928, p. 2, QSA 83/7.

⁸³*Ibid.*

the State Government approach the issue of introducing national co-ordination of broadcasting carefully:

a very large amount of good to the listening public may result from a healthy and helpful co-ordination of activities ... but if that co-ordination ... is to be secured at the expense of placing all stations under the control of one amusement corporation, then it would be very wrong for the State Government to enter into any agreement handing over the controls of its own station.⁸⁴

Robinson then wrote to the PMG, who suggested that 4QG initiate steps that would lead to co-ordination. Robinson subsequently travelled to Sydney and Melbourne in April 1928, holding discussions with the PMG, the Chief Inspector of Wireless, the Radio Inspector of NSW, the directors of Farmer and Company, the general manager of 3LO, the manager of 3AR, the general manager of 2RC Limited, the general manager of J.C. Williamson Limited, and the managing director and deputy general manager of AWA. These discussions centred on the matter of national co-ordination and the developing trend toward mergers of commercially-backed 'A' stations.⁸⁵

Robinson's discussions proved inconclusive. Each interested party had private plans under consideration, and only the 2FC/2BL group was prepared to offer Robinson serious suggestions. 2FC's directors proposed an amalgamation with 4QG, allowing the State Government to retain control of broadcasting facilities. In return, programming and revenue collection would be controlled from Sydney through a centralised Board

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁸⁵ Letter from Robinson to Under Secretary, 1 May 1928, p. 2, QSA 81/8. In April 1928 complete amalgamation had taken place between 2FC and 2BL; negotiations were "at an advanced stage" over the merger of 3AR and 3LO; 3LO had acquired a controlling interest in Perth's 6WF; Adelaide's 5CL had begun discussions with Melbourne and Sydney interests (especially J.C. Williams, owner of 3LO, of whom 5CL was "very suspicious"); and negotiations toward a merger between 2FC/2BL and 3AR/3LO were "quite likely." Only 4QG and 7ZL were not involved in mergers.

of Control. Robinson declined, stressing to Farmer's that Queensland was committed to public utility broadcasting.

In November 1928 Robinson advised Premier McCormack that the Commonwealth Government planned to take over all 'A' stations and lease them to commercial interests. If such a scheme was implemented, Robinson argued, it would "amount to the taking over of what is already a national service and handing [it] to a commercial enterprise."⁸⁶ He suggested that 4QG remain independent and apply for a five-year extension to its licence. McCormack agreed, and wrote to the Prime Minister reiterating Robinson's advice.⁸⁷

Bruce contacted the PMG, who explained his intention to erect, maintain and operate a chain of 'A' stations, linked by landline for simultaneous broadcasts, and place a contract for the supply of programmes.⁸⁸ He said that the plan was being adopted to benefit those dwelling in sparsely-populated areas, and asked that McCormack sympathise and co-operate with his Department.

A month later Robinson wrote a draft letter to the Prime Minister for Queensland's Deputy Premier, W. Forgan Smith. In it he stated that:

too much reliance has been placed in the development of broadcasting by evolutionary means. What is now wanted is a definite clear-cut scheme and policy along which the movement may gradually develop.⁸⁹

Robinson believed the PMG's scheme to be the result of 'evolutionary' processes which presented axiomatic solutions to perceived current

⁸⁶Letter, 21 Nov. 1928, p. 1, QSA 82/13.

⁸⁷Letter, 23 Nov. 1928, AA A461/1 B422/1/6.

⁸⁸Letter, 4 Dec. 1928, pp. 1, 2, AA A461/1 B422/1/6.

⁸⁹Letter, 21 Dec. 1928, p. 2, QSA 82/13.

problems, but led to the multiplication of real problems. He said that the PMG's proposal amounted to the destruction of a national utility, and that the Queensland Government refuse to surrender its station and studios for sale. He suggested the establishment of a national corporation similar to the British Broadcasting Corporation, in his eyes "the most perfect system in use in any part of the world,"⁹⁰ and detailed how such an organisation would operate in Australia. Forgan Smith urged Bruce to have the PMG's plans reversed, saying that 4QG would only be surrendered on Robinson's terms.⁹¹ This was greeted in Canberra as another intrusion of 'socialism from the north,' and dismissed.

Less than four weeks later, in January 1929, the Queensland Government had reversed its stance and was trying to rid itself of 4QG. The reason for this abrupt change in policy is unclear, but it probably resulted from changes in the economic climate, and the previous failure of most other State Enterprises. Providing that parties reached a mutually satisfactory deal, McCormack said, the QRS would not object to surrendering its licence from 31 August 1929.⁹² This was five months before the initial five-year licence expired. H.P. Brown, Secretary of the PMG's Department, replied to McCormack's offer, noting with appreciation "the acquiescence by the Queensland Government in the proposals for a National Broadcasting Service."⁹³

Brown agreed to buy 4QG's plant and station, and signalled his intention to continue using the current site for broadcasting. Both parties were pleased with these proposals. The PMG's Department leased the

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Letter, 28 Dec. 1928, AA A/461/1 B422/1/6.

⁹² Letter, 23 Jan. 1929, AA A/461/1 B422/1/6.

⁹³ Letter, 1 Feb. 1929, AA A/461/1 B422/1/6.

roof of the State Insurance Building for an initial period of two years at the annual rate of £836. A long argument developed, however, over the value of the QRS's transmitting equipment. The capital cost of setting up the station was £14,772, but the PMG's Department requested 10% depreciation per annum to be subtracted, bringing its net worth to £9,700. This was further reduced (without explanation) to £8,500 in November 1929,⁹⁴ but to effect a swift settlement the PMG eventually agreed to pay £9,000 for the station.⁹⁵ From this point, transfer of technical facilities to the PMG's Department proceeded smoothly, and the station officially changed ownership at midnight on 30 January 1930. The Australian Broadcasting Company became responsible for programming, although Robinson and his programme staff were retained. The Queensland Radio Service had ceased to exist.

⁹⁴Letter from Brown to Queensland Under Secretary, 13 Nov. 1929, QSA 81/8.

⁹⁵Letter, 6 Dec. 1929, AA A/461 B422/1/6.

Chapter Two

Utilitarian Programming

Programme scheduling in the 1920s

When 4QG began broadcasting on 27 July 1925, the notion of a continuous flow of programmed words and music had not emerged. The station opened for broadcasting once or twice per day, for periods of between one and two and a half hours. Each time it opened, before the more sophisticated valve sets became popular, listeners were asked to "stand by" for a tune-in signal, lasting for five minutes. This enabled them to manipulate the wires in their crystal sets until static was minimised. Then followed ordinary broadcast material. Most Australian stations followed the British scheduling pattern, preferring to broadcast an entire item, although it may run into the next scheduled item. Similarly, Australian stations allowed frequent 'dead air' gaps between programmes, unlike American stations which placed a premium on precision and punctuality at the expense of textual coherence.⁹⁶ 4QG programmes were usually constructed to conform to the schedule, which guaranteed programmes of preordained length, but if a concert lasted for two hours, the broadcast lasted no longer: the station ceased to function until the next scheduled programme was due to be aired.

By mid-August 1925, 4QG broadcast at the following times (these times refer to the week beginning Friday 14 August):

⁹⁶On timing and scheduling see Boddy 1979: 44, 45.

- Friday:** time unspecified - special concert, details of which had not been drafted.
- Saturday:** 8.00-10.00p.m. - studio concert & orchestral dance music from Lennon's Hotel ballroom
- Sunday:** 7.30-10.00p.m. - church service & variety concert
- Monday:** 1.00-2.00p.m. - market report, stock exchange report, weather report and news from the *Daily Standard*
8.00-10.00p.m. - Tivoli Operatic orchestra & studio concert
- Tuesday:** 8.00-10.00p.m. - studio concert & Special Apollo Club Choir broadcast from the Brisbane School of Arts
- Wednesday:** 8.00-10.30p.m. - Salvation Army Band recital; concert; lecturette on "Migration and the New Settlers' League" (hence late close)
- Thursday:** 1.00-2.00p.m. - (as for same time on Monday)
8.00-10.00p.m. - (unspecified)⁹⁷

When the permanent station was operating, Robinson envisaged the following weekday schedule:

- 1.00-1.30 p.m. market reports, weather forecast, news services
- 3.00-4.00 p.m. studio concert
- 6.30-7.00 p.m. children's hour
- 7.00-7.30 p.m. farmers' session
- 7.45-8.00 p.m. lecturette session
- 8.00-10.00 p.m. studio concert⁹⁸

⁹⁷WW, 14 Aug. 1925, pp. 33-35.

⁹⁸QRN, 1 Feb. 1926, p. 7.

The QRS circulated a monthly programme (a 'skeleton'), and a detailed schedule to about 150 newspapers and magazines in Australia and New Zealand. The schedule included names of individual artists, musical items and instruments played by soloists, as well as information such as which denomination was rostered for the church service and names of speakers for lecturettes. The transmission schedule steadily improved over the years. The *Telegraph* states that the following changes took place in 1928:

- larger morning sessions
- morning women's session
- enlarged afternoon session
- 30 minutes' earlier start to evening session
- night programmes "considerably improved by the weeding out of unsuitable artists"
- the introduction of once weekly dance nights
- special bi-weekly news bulletins, especially for the benefit of distant listeners
- a special children's bedtime story session instituted on Sunday nights

The article claims that these changes resulted in a 33 1/3 % increase in service to listeners during the year. Robinson is quoted as saying, "A third increase in service rendered without an increase in payment is surely a record of progress."⁹⁹

⁹⁹ *Telegraph*, 2 Jan. 1929, p. 7. A QRS studio log, held at the John Oxley Library, and covering the period from 1 December 1929, provides detailed information on the daily schedule, including time, item, title, artist, author and publisher of musical items.

These changes and improvements continued, so that by mid-1929 the station was broadcasting for 56 hours per week,¹⁰⁰ and by 1932, when the ABC took control of the station, this had risen to 72 hours per week. The format was as follows:

Monday - Friday:

7.30-8.30a.m.	news, weather, cables, music (note the reversed order of importance)
11.00a.m.-2.00p.m.	women's session, midday music, markets, midday news and weather
3.00-4.30p.m.	music
6.00-8.00p.m.	utilitarian services, bedtime stories, late news and market reports, music, lectures
8.00-11.00p.m.	entertainment, late news

Saturdays:

7.30-8.30a.m.	as for weekdays
11.30a.m.-5.30p.m.	music, news, racing, sport, music
6.00-8.00p.m.	utilitarian services, bedtime stories, sport
8.00-11.30p.m.	entertainment, sport, late news

Sundays:

10.30a.m.-12.15p.m.	music, church service
3.00-4.30p.m.	music
6.00-7.30p.m.	children's church service, bedtime stories, music
7.30-10.00p.m.	church service, entertainment ¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ 4QG...*Past Policy and Recommendations for the Future*, p. 5, QSA 82/7.

¹⁰¹ 'Outline of Activities,' in 'Reports - Queensland' file, ABCDA. A QRS Studio Log, held at the John Oxley Library, and covering the period from 1 December 1929, provides detailed information on the daily schedule. It includes time, item, artist, author and publisher of musical items.

A QRS studio log, held at the John Oxley Library, and covering the period from 1 December 1929, provides detailed information on the daily schedule, including time, item, title, artist, author and publisher of musical items. The remainder of this chapter and chapter three describe the main types of programme broadcast on 4QG from 1925 to 1930.

News sessions

From its inception, the QRS intended news to be a central component of its programming. Together with market reports, weather information and occasional special broadcasts, the news genre was regarded as being of primary importance.

Two elements shaped 4QG's programming policy: one was a strong influence from the general experience of other broadcasting companies, brought to the station by people such as Robinson and Stevens (see Appendix 4). News programmes followed the format set by stations such as 2BL, 2FC, 3LO and 3AR, which began broadcasting between November 1923 and January 1924. These stations in turn copied the pattern dictated by broadcasters in Britain.

The other influence on news policy was more direct. Robinson had worked as a journalist on the *Sydney Morning Herald* from 1916 to 1922, and had been responsible for 2FC's news and utility sessions from 1923 to 1924. Thus he was ideally suited to organise a news service in Brisbane and negotiate arrangements with the local print media. He initiated dialogue with Brisbane newspapers in July 1925, suggesting that

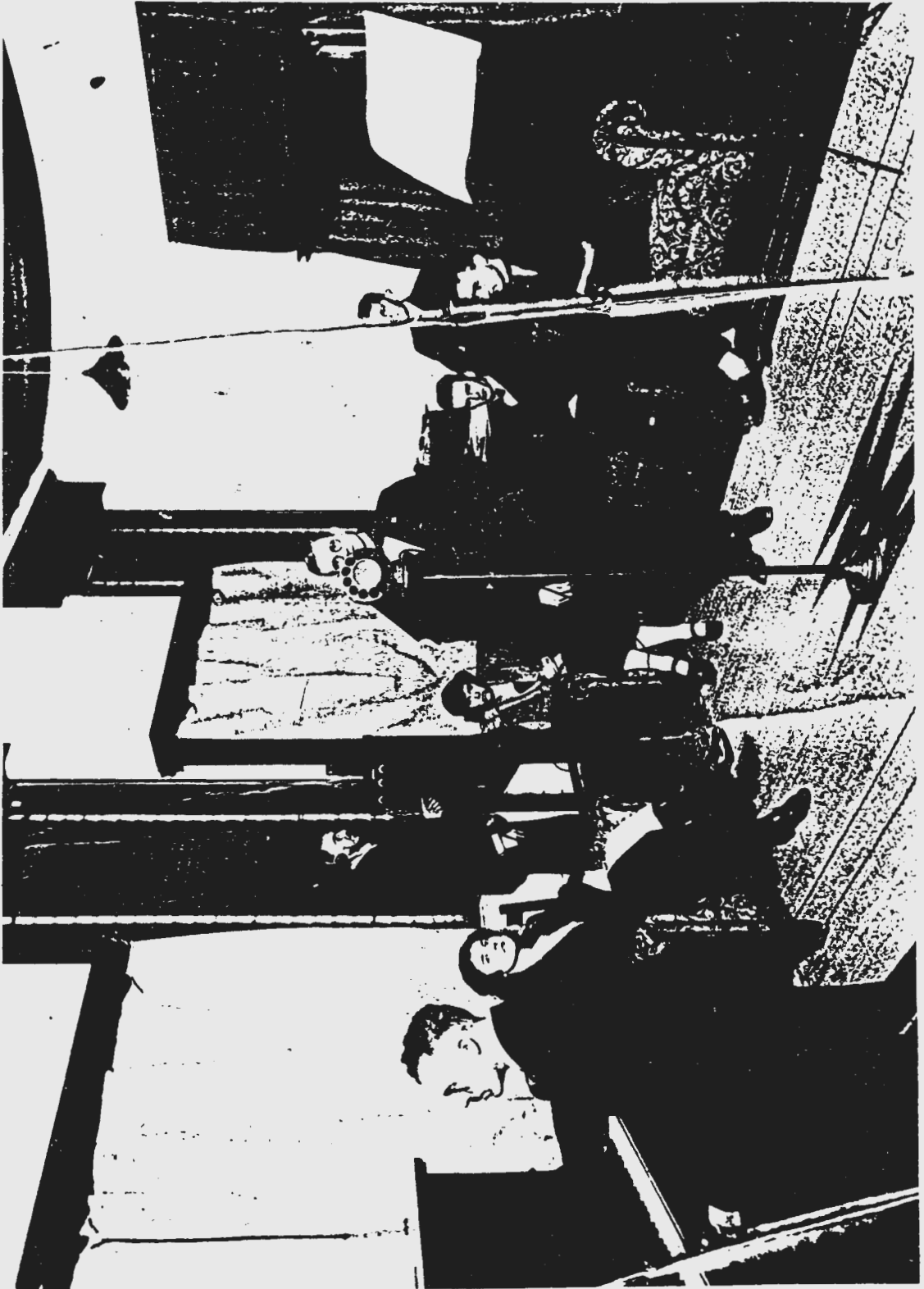


Photo courtesy G.P.O. Museum

Robinson and QRS staff in the temporary studio, Executive Building, 1925

the respective companies act in conjunction with the QRS to provide news items for the station, in return for advertising. The newspaper companies agreed, and provided 4QG with news from various sources for daily news programmes, at no direct cost to the station.

The process by which news items were transferred from the pages of a newspaper to the 'ether' was simple. Newspapers made available a special set of proofs at a certain time each day for the station. For example, Brisbane's evening paper, the *Daily Standard*, provided their proofs at 1.00 p.m.. These were collected by 4QG's messenger and read into the microphone at the designated times (see schedules above for details). The only requirement of the newspapers was that the station acknowledge the name of the paper providing the items. C.V. Woodland, 4QG's announcer, described his difficulties in reading news live to air in an interview for the *Queensland Radio News* in 1926. He said that "more often than not it is sight-read ...Smudged proofs are common; even misplaced lines have occurred, and a man has to be most alert and careful when reading such matter."¹⁰²

Despite such problems, the system seemed to work very well. The station reported in 1930 that "the courteous help given by the Brisbane press has enabled the station to give the very best of service to its listeners."¹⁰³ However, a major problem arose when news arrived late or when some extraordinary circumstance prevented individual items from being cleared for broadcasting. Robinson screened items to prevent erroneous or politically extremist matter from being aired. Some items of news, while being suitable for a certain class of newspaper, were not

¹⁰²QRN, 1 Oct. 1926, p. 20.

¹⁰³ *Souvenir 4QG 1925-1930*, p. 9, ABCDA.

deemed suitable for broadcasting, and could contravene stringent censorship regulations imposed by the PMG's Department. A broader discussion of this area is contained in the section on politics and propaganda below.

A report commissioned soon after the Australian Broadcasting Commission took control of 4QG notes that news services, as utilitarian broadcasts, were "of the utmost importance." to the station and its listeners.¹⁰⁴ This reinforces the notion that 4QG was, while under the control of the QRS, a unique experiment in 'public utility' broadcasting. The report explains the state of 4QG's news service in 1930 or 1931 as follows:

- the Queensland station compared favourably with those in other states.
- four daily newspapers provided news items (these were the *Telegraph*, the *Daily Standard*, the *Brisbane Courier* and the *Daily Mail*).
- 4QG was 'allowed' (it is not clear by whom) four news sessions per day, each of seven minutes' duration.
- in addition to newspaper proofs, the station had access to cable news and material from the British Official Wireless news service.
- Brisbane metropolitan dailies also provided seven minutes of social news each morning for the women's session.
- *The Queenslander*, a weekly journal, provided two special bulletins per week.
- 4QG occasionally provided its own special news service, monitoring floods, fires, shipping disasters and aircraft accidents. The report

¹⁰⁴ 'Outline of Activities,' report, in 'Reports - Queensland' file, ABCDA.

states that the station "remained in constant touch with the Weather Bureau, the Police, and the Ambulance, and remained open throughout the nights when matters were serious."

The social news and special bulletins from *The Queenslander* were included at the direct request of distant listeners who received papers at irregular intervals.¹⁰⁵ The report suggested the introduction of a nationally co-ordinated news service, making use of telegrams at press rates to be negotiated with the PMG's Department. The proposed scheme involved each state preparing its own bulletin every evening and sending it to other stations run by the Commission.

Although the report reviewed 4QG's news service favourably, it referred to one weakness. The writer noted that "at the present time we are in the hands of the newspapers and the tendency is to reduce the quality of the news which is made available to us instead of to increase it." Newspapers felt threatened by the swift rise in popularity and power of the radio stations. Controlling what news they were able to broadcast was one way of curbing this influence. 4QG desired to present news that was as recent as possible, and news compiled by its own staff would probably be more fresh than newspaper proofs. As later history shows, stations realised the advantages of employing their own news staff rather depending upon newspapers to provide material. However, it was not until 1939 that the Commission established an independent news service, and it was not free from newspaper links until 1947.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Roberts 1972: 153.

Market reports and farmers' sessions

As chapter one suggests, one of the primary goals of the Queensland government in establishing a broadcasting station was to provide a powerful link with the rural community. W.N. Gillies perceived that broadcasting could end the isolation of the man on the land,¹⁰⁷ and remove the strong distinction between rural and urban Queenslanders. Through broadcasting, country people could be influenced and educated. Further, the Government had at its disposal a means for ideological control of the country population.

As a result, one of the first programmes to be planned was a market report. In the words of the *Telegraph*,

[t]he day is dawning when the farmers of Queensland will "listen-in" to market and weather reports by day, and to concerts by night ... it is hoped that the market reports by day will be as sweet music in the ears of listeners-in as the concert programmes at night.¹⁰⁸

The coming of radio and the advent of frequent and accurate market reports was thus a real step of progress to many. Prior to the advent of market reports, primary producers relied on newspaper reports (often days old), or on the written reports of their selling agents, before they knew the financial worth of the goods they had sold.¹⁰⁹ W.H. Barnes, State member for Wynnum, said of 4QG's service to rural communities that "[t]here must be a sense of loneliness to live in certain places; but by means of this radio service people living in distant and isolated places are brought into close touch with the world. It will be one of the factors

¹⁰⁷ Walker 1973: 23.

¹⁰⁸ *Telegraph*, 27 Nov. 1924, p. 3.

¹⁰⁹ *Souvenir 4QG 1925-1930*, p. 17, ABCDA.

W. HAIGH & Co, Ltd. IPSWICH.



He gets his News Promptly now!

No waiting for the Mail Man now—No lonely nights barren of amusement. Our **READY TO USE Wireless Sets** bring you the news before it is printed and entertain you nightly with instrumental and vocal items from all the Capital cities of Australia. You know daily how the produce, stock and share markets are going. Our Sets are a boon to many, and are now considered a necessity in any well furnished home. Sets of all types ready to use from Crystal to Six Valves

No Howling Valves—No Aerial Required

Our "Super Het." does not emit any ugly squeals, also no aerial is required. Just put it on the table and switch on the battery. **A CHILD CAN WORK IT.** Adelaide nightly without an aerial.

Don't Buy a Wireless Set—

Until you write us for full information or arrange a personal interview, it would be well to defer buying a set as we have the very thing you require at a minimum cost. P.O. Box 53, Ipswich.

W. HAIGH & Co, Ltd. IPSWICH
PHONE IPSWICH 223 (3 LINES)

Robinson 1926: 52

Wireless advertisement encouraging farmers to purchase sets, 1926

which will materially help in the development of Queensland."¹¹⁰ The desire for massive regional and northern development fostered by E.G. Theodore was part of the reason for establishing a station in Queensland.

From its inception, the QRS broadcast a market report at 1.00 p.m. each weekday. The station itself did not immediately participate in collecting data for the reports. The Council of Agriculture supplied full details daily through its own research officers. The Department of Public Instruction was responsible for providing occasional lectures to farmers. A former farmer and successful businessman named Robert Wight provided the required services.¹¹¹ The Department of Agriculture and Stock employed him until December 1926, then withdrew his subsidy. The QRS subsequently assumed full responsibility for the farmers' sessions, including market reports, and Robinson appointed Wight as his Markets Officer.¹¹² Little change resulted from these moves in the sessions. By 1930 the station broadcast market reports at midday, in mid-afternoon, and during the evening.¹¹³ This gives an indication of their popularity and utilitarian value to listeners.

Information did not always come directly from official officers connected with the QRS. For example, on one occasion the Queensland Registrar-General requested that his young son, a wireless enthusiast, be given a tour of 4QG's studios. Robinson agreed, and soon after obliging, began receiving lists of statistics from the Registrar-General's Department for broadcasting. The Registrar-General, George Porter, wrote to Robinson saying,

¹¹⁰ QPD, Vol. 148, 1926, p. 1143.

¹¹¹ Letter from Robinson to Under Secretary, Department of Public Instruction, QSA 83/15.

¹¹² 'Outline of Activities,' in 'Reports - Queensland' file, ABCDA.

¹¹³ *Souvenir 4QG 1925-1930*, p. 17.

I am pleased to know that the little report on Vital Statistics was appreciated and made use of by you, and I will in future forward you, from time to time, small statistical reports on Vitals, wool, sugar, agriculture etc.¹¹⁴

An example of such statistics from August 1926 appears on the following page, showing some material that 4QG added to its farmers' sessions.

A 4QG publication, *Souvenir 4QG 1925-1930*, tells how one grazier benefited financially from market report broadcasts.¹¹⁵ The individual, apparently one of Australia's most prominent cattle breeders, bought a wireless set worth almost £200. Within 48 hours he had heard a market report containing information which prompted him to ship stock to his nearest market centre for sale. He is said to have made a profit of about £1000. The station advised that it always pays to install a receiving set. Similar accounts (although usually not as rewarding) were reported occasionally in newspapers and the wireless press.

In addition to market reports, 4QG began broadcasting lectures of interest to the farming community in 1927. These were scheduled each weeknight from 7.15 to 7.30 p.m..¹¹⁶ Lectures were given at the studios and comprised material on various topics. The following is a list of subjects lectured upon in March 1927:

- "The Science of Animal Breeding," by Professor Goddard, University of Queensland;
- "The Commerce of the Pig," by Mr E.J. Shelton, Instructor in Pig Raising;

¹¹⁴Letter, 15 Jun. 1926, QSA 84/1.

¹¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹¹⁶QRN, 1 Mar. 1927, p. 53.

Oversea Trade for the year ended 30th June, 1926.

Compiled in the Office of the Registrar General, Brisbane,
from information supplied entirely by the Collector of Customs.

Note: This review is subject to final revision. The figures
where quoted in parenthesis denote 1924-5 figures.

TOTAL TRADE --- The value of Oversea Trade, Imports and Exports combined, during 1925-6 was £40,128,699 or £45:11:11d per head of the population. These figures constitute a record for the State being 7.7 per cent in excess of the previous record of £37,274,975 or £44:12:11d per capita during the year 1924-5.

IMPORTS --- The total value of Imports from Oversea to Queensland was £13,743,833 (£12,833,375) or £15:19:2d (£15 7:5d) per capita.

The principal articles of Import were as under:

Apparel and Soft Goods, £3,031,879 (£3,061,928); Vehicles £1,989,963 (£1,653,584); Implements and Machinery £1,411,622 (£1,344,276); Metals, Manufactures of, £1,236,128 (£1,221,000); Oils in bulk £1,300,111 (£1,055,222); Iron and Steel £693,337 (£966,975); Paper £366,982 (£355,554); Rubber Goods £350,475 (£216,400); Earthenware, Cement, China, Glass and Stoneware £271,188 (£271,615); Jute, goods and Bags etc., £139,701 (£215,529); Drugs and Chemicals £232,463 (£226,948); Spirits £210,314 (£255,850); Timber £141,675 (£60,645); Tea £114,162 (£106,517) and Musical Instruments £103,804 (£98,828).

EXPORTS --- The total value of Exports Oversea from Queensland was £26,384,866 (£24,441,600) or £30:12:9d (£29:5:6d) per capita.

The principal articles of Export were as under:

Wool (greasy) £11,636,937 (£9,902,962); Wool (scoured) £1,307,051 (£1,089,990); Sugar £4,969,902 (£2,090,327); Meat, all kinds £3,429,551 (£4,158,971); Butter and Butter Substitutes £2,478,497 (£2,901,725); Hides and Skins £744,961 (£672,952); Tallow £521,768 (£590,048); Cotton (raw) £254,095 (£375,849); Cheese £250,633 (£273,494); Lead £106,289 (£73,353) and Trochus Shell £73,756 (£44,086).

BALANCE OF TRADE --- The Exports exceeded the Imports by no less than £12,641,033. The balances in favour of Exports for the past five years have been:

1925-6 - £12,641,033; 1924-5 - £11,608,225; 1923-4 - £3,022,637
1922-3 - £4,999,160; 1921-2 - £3,933,657

The following table shows the Oversea Trade of Queensland during the past ten years:

Year ended 30th June	Imports	Exports	Total Trade
1917	£6,265,102	£14,542,270	£20,807,372
1918	4,482,745	10,960,411	15,443,156
1919	6,075,649	12,447,416	18,523,065
1920	7,218,694	14,403,922	21,622,616
1921	11,840,442	15,171,884	27,012,326
1922	8,639,446	17,573,103	26,212,549
1923	10,782,906	15,792,072	26,574,978
1924	11,605,660	14,628,305	26,233,973
1925	12,833,375	24,441,600	37,274,975
1926	13,743,833	26,384,866	40,128,699

C. W. BRAK
Deputy Registrar General

STATEMENT SHOWING THE NUMBER of LIVE STOCK IN THE VARIOUS
PASTORAL DISTRICTS and in the State on 1st JANUARY,
1926, together with similar details (in
brackets) for last year:-

BURKE -	Horses - 53,690 (54,562); Cattle - 825,822 (844,987); Sheep - 2,928,780 (2,654,350); Pigs - 516 (432).
BURNETT -	Horses - 39,283 (39,952); Cattle - 467,036 (467,061); Sheep - 5,263 (5,296); Pigs - 32,933 (23,167).
COOK -	Horses - 49,072 (49,815); Cattle - 527,624 (502,716); Sheep - 270 (695); Pigs - 7,673 (6,448).
DARLING DOWNS -	Horses - 72,569 (69,736); Cattle - 468,389 (430,626); Sheep - 1,862,217 (1,478,163); Pigs - 42,180 (31,961).
GREGORY NORTH -	Horses - 24,711 (29,157); Cattle - 297,335 (330,000); Sheep - 1,964,021 (1,885,035); Pigs - 35 (62).
GREGORY SOUTH -	Horses - 10,215 (11,173); Cattle - 176,275 (201,684); Sheep - 286,189 (292,280); Pigs - 1 (24).
LEITCHHARDT -	Horses - 48,058 (50,693); Cattle - 761,676 (761,349); Sheep - 979,070 (947,043); Pigs - 1,915 (1,663).
MARANOVA -	Horses - 29,254 (29,654); Cattle - 273,224 (311,141); Sheep - 2,765,128 (2,416,934); Pigs - 1,553 (1,547).
MITCHELL -	Horses - 41,253 (44,283); Cattle - 196,115 (202,130); Sheep - 6,695,458 (6,384,802); Pigs - 498 (491).
MURKIN -	Horses - 65,461 (65,832); Cattle - 502,658 (473,197); Sheep - 25,257 (18,047); Pigs - 75,731 (50,434).
NORTH KENNEDY -	Horses - 70,456 (77,309); Cattle - 503,296 (491,309); Sheep - 4,528 (4,069); Pigs - 5,673 (4,751).
PORT CURTIS -	Horses - 39,093 (40,907); Cattle - 449,203 (439,046); Sheep - 27,462 (24,671); Pigs - 8,523 (6,488).
SOUTH KENNEDY -	Horses - 37,985 (38,072); Cattle - 432,297 (435,105); Sheep - 154,642 (143,657); Pigs - 1281 (1,088).
WARREGO -	Horses - 24,255 (24,312); Cattle - 236,187 (237,541); Sheep - 2,938,281 (2,765,960); Pigs - 600 (516).
WIDE BAY -	Horses - 33,012 (34,636); Cattle - 319,108 (326,761); Sheep - 5,757 (2250); Pigs - 20,485 (17,091).

	HORSES	CATTLE	SHEEP	PIGS
TOTAL FOR YEAR 1925 -	638,372	6,436,645	20,653,323	199,598
TOTAL FOR YEAR 1926 -	660,093	6,454,673	19,028,252	156,163
INCREASE ----	-	-	1,635,071	43,435
DECREASE ----	21,721	18,008	-	-

Compiled in the Office of the Registrar General (Mr. Geo. Porter), Brisbane
21/1/26

- "Talks on Sheep," by Mr W.G. Brown, Instructor in Sheep and Wool;
- "The Milk Supply of the City of New York," by Mr J. Murray, Principal of Gatton Agricultural College;
- "Our Meat Supply - Past and Present," by Mr H.G. Cheeseman, Senior Inspector of Slaughter-Houses.¹¹⁷

From this list it seems that such lectures were not of a specialist nature but were designed to interest the general community as much as those employed in primary industries.

A number of problems arose in relation to farmers' lectures and market reports between 1925 and 1930. Often they were trivial and swiftly overcome. One problem concerned a desire on the part of some farmers to operate an egg pool (this is discussed on pages 54 and 55). Another arose over the question of whether fruit market reports should be included in daily market reports.¹¹⁸ Robinson refused to allow this because he believed that insufficient fruitgrowers had purchased listeners' licences. He suggested that if the chairman of the Committee of Direction of Fruit Marketing furnished him, by the end of 1927, with a list of 500 fruitgrowers who operated licenced wireless receivers, he would include fruit reports in daily market reports.

4QG market reports differed in several respects from those of other stations. The latter apparently gleaned statements on market values from companies that had a financial interest in primary produce. Robinson originally did not appreciate this arrangement, and preferred to deal

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *QRN*, 1 Apr. 1927, p. 3 (editorial); 2 May 1927, p. 5.

directly with producers at the markets. Wight, the Markets Officer, personally visited the Brisbane markets each day and provided listeners with "fair and accurate market information."¹¹⁹ However, market reports cost money to provide. Robinson estimated that the annual cost for 1926 was approximately £2000. By mid-1927, when the QRS was providing its own reports, he decided that the cost was too great to be carried by the station. He sought subsidies from private companies, permitting them to supply the daily reports.¹²⁰ This contradicts information in *Souvenir 4QG 1925-1930*, but is probably true, because the latter was simply a publicity document. Robinson argued that the new arrangements were fair because indirectly they forced all agriculturalists to pay for any broadcast market information they received.¹²¹

A later report prepared for the Australian Broadcasting Commission in about 1932 shows, however, that the original system was brought back into service. By 1932 the Department of Agriculture and Stock prepared a lecture schedule six months in advance for 4QG. It also endeavoured to make the lectures seasonal. For example, a lecture entitled "Weevils in Cotton Buds" was broadcast when weevils were expected to be damaging cotton crops.¹²² In the early 1930s the Department made its officers freely available to the station, while 4QG paid a small sum to each lecturer, called "tea money."

The *Queensland Radio News* commented in 1927 that

4QG, ever since its inception, has displayed a keen interest in the problems of the man on the land, and realising the importance of wireless to those sturdy men and

¹¹⁹ *Souvenir 4QG 1925-1930*, p. 17.

¹²⁰ *QRN*, 2 May 1927, p. 3 (editorial).

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² 'Outline of Activities,' in 'Reports - Queensland' file, ABCDA.

women of the outback, a good portion of air space has been allotted in catering for the rural listeners-in.¹²³

Market reports were a significant part of the station's service to primary producers and rural communities.

Politics and propaganda

4QG effected the first broadcast of a political speech in Queensland on 28 July 1925, at the opening of the State Parliament.¹²⁴ This seems also to have been the first time that the opening of Parliament was broadcast in Australia. Political broadcasts in general, regardless of their content, generated considerable debate throughout the 1920s, with American and British argument often spilling over into Australian discussions. *Wireless Weekly*, for example, adapted an article from the *New York Tribune Radio Magazine*,¹²⁵ championing "the farmer" who gained immense benefit from radio information, political as well as agricultural. The medium's constructed sense of intimacy with the individual listener was exploited by politicians: the article suggests that "driving miles on a hot day only to find [oneself] on the fringe of the crowd unable to hear" was a thing of the past. The advent of wireless enabled the citizen to "weigh thoughts in his armchair better than if jostled or influenced by a crowd."¹²⁶ Politicians' speeches were brought into clearer perspective because they were less likely to be carried into "extravagance of speech" when in the serenity of a studio, bereft of the tumult and shouting of a live audience.

¹²³ *QRN*, 1 Mar. 1927, p. 53.

¹²⁴ *WW*, 6 Nov. 1925, p. 13.

¹²⁵ *WW*, 16 Oct. 1925, p. 48.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

This point of view is repeated in the same journal a year later, in reference to the 1926 referendum. Station 2KY (Voigt's NSW Trades Hall Broadcasting Station) planned to attack the Federal Government's referendum proposals, a move welcomed by *Wireless Weekly* as a means of rationalising passionate and exaggerated political oratory. The article closes with the interesting comment that

[t]he broadcasting of political speeches must be done by the B class station [*sic*], which receive no share of the license fees - perhaps one speaker for and one against the Government's proposals will be broadcast by the A class stations, and no more.¹²⁷

Queensland Premier William McCormack broadcast a referendum message on 4QG on 2 September 1926, at 8.00 p.m., urging electors to vote "No" to the two referendum questions. Australian Workers Union offices throughout the state, previously equipped with receiving sets, were urged to convene special meetings to coincide with the broadcast, maximising the potential audience.¹²⁸ No mention is made of a broadcast in favour of a "Yes" vote.

Although the QRS was owned by the State Government, any suggestion that it was used as an instrument for propaganda or party political purposes was strenuously denied. Robinson realised both the value and the danger of introducing radio as a public utility, and worked hard to provide what he thought was a 'balanced' service to listeners. His notion of balance was whatever federal broadcasting regulations decreed. Perusing the news sources used by the station, one notes that the station strongly favoured Empire and ideologically conservative politics. The

¹²⁷ *WW*, 13 Aug. 1926, p. 41.

¹²⁸ *Worker*, 1 Sep. 1926, p. 11.

Queensland Labor Government had by the mid-1920s moved considerably to the Right of its position a decade earlier under T.J. Ryan. This was echoed by other stations and carried over into the following decade. In fact, in the late 1930s "broadcasts from the centre of the empire, especially if they involved royalty, often replaced regular items."¹²⁹

A notable exception to this rule occurred on Wednesday 19 August 1925 when an item read in the midday news bulletin caused serious repercussions. The item referred to Britain's involvement in China, suggesting that the Washington Treaty had never been put into effect by any of its signatories, and that Britain had decided to "resort to arms in an attempt to uphold her financial interests" in the Orient.¹³⁰ The broadcast added that "every available ship of war and troops were being rapidly mobilised and a demand had been made that the British financial interests must be protected regardless of what the newly created Customs Commission declared,"¹³¹ and that this action would probably result in war.

The item created a great deal of negative response and embarrassment for the QRS and its Director. It provoked immediate responses from the PMG's Radio Inspectors in Brisbane and Melbourne, requesting explanations. Brisbane newspapers printed news of the 'scandal,' and the *Brisbane Courier*, although later admitting to knowing that the item was broadcast accidentally, took the liberty to telegraph the news throughout the nation. The Prime Minister, S.M. Bruce, was questioned on the 20th August by Mr D. Cameron, MP, about the issue

¹²⁹Johnson 1987a: 369.

¹³⁰*SMH*, 20 Aug. 1925.

¹³¹*Ibid.*

and the government's power to censor broadcast material.¹³² Bruce wrote personally to Robinson, criticising him for permitting the broadcast but acknowledging the fact that later the same day he had broadcast three special announcements disclaiming and apologising for the mistake. He made the observation that

One of the inherent defects of broadcasting is that it is quite easy for erroneous statements to be promulgated by the unintentional omission of words from or by some accidental re-arrangement of the context of a statement ... The international aspect of this [item] is, moreover, complicated by the fact that the matter broadcasted from high-powered stations in Australia is heard in many foreign countries ... every effort should be made to ensure the elimination of all matter which may in any manner reflect upon the policy of the British Government or the Commonwealth Government in their relations with other nations.¹³³

Robinson was clearly worried by the broadcasting of such an item, and explained in a private letter to his friend Jim Malone, Radio Inspector in Melbourne, what had transpired to allow such a mistake to occur. His messenger had arrived late at the studio with proofs from the office of the *Daily Standard*, and to prevent delay these were not censored but read directly to air. He added that the *Brisbane Courier* actively compounded the problem by telegraphing the matter around Australia, the reason being that it did not "like the Radio Service, and [had] done its best to damn it ever since the show started."¹³⁴ Robinson himself, although in the same room as the announcer at the time, was unaware of the broadcast until he read about it in the *Courier* the following morning.

The above instance is a rare example of overt propaganda being aired accidentally. The great majority of politically-motivated broadcasts were those of official speeches by politicians. An early example of such is

¹³² CPD, 20 Aug. 1925, p. 1587.

¹³³ Letter, 21 Aug. 1925, AA A461/1 N422/1/66.

¹³⁴ Letter, 21 Aug. 1925, QSA 83/9.

an address on the Federal Conversion Loan from Melbourne, carried by (PMG-owned) trunk line and broadcast through all 'A' stations in Australia. Robinson saw this as a novel and welcome feature for 4QG, but was required to obtain permission from the Premier's Under Secretary before it could be arranged.¹³⁵ However, throughout the 1920s a debate raged over whether politicians had the right to broadcast speeches, and if so, what regulations should be imposed to maintain order and fairness.

In September 1925 the Federal Government placed a partial ban on political speeches throughout the duration of the federal election campaign that year. This permitted only one speech to be broadcast in each state by the leader of the three main parties. Gillies, Queensland Premier, pointed out to the Prime Minister that "the degree of service which [wireless broadcasting] will afford the community does not depend on the degree to which it will entertain them, but rather on the degree to which it will instruct them and keep them in touch with the current affairs."¹³⁶ Gillies explained that he saw no difference between a wireless station and a newspaper, except that one used spoken words and the other printed words. He urged Bruce to allow unrestricted broadcasting of political speeches from 'A' stations during election campaigns. Bruce replied that broadcasting stations were "entirely different" from newspapers because listeners were required to purchase a license before using a receiving set.¹³⁷ The license fee paid for a service catering to "the tastes of a vastly varying audience of listeners," and Bruce argued that federal regulation was the sole reliable means of satisfying the various

¹³⁵Letter, 15 Aug. 1925, QSA 81/8.

¹³⁶Letter, 6 Oct. 1925, AA A461/1 D422/1/8.

¹³⁷Letter, 20 Oct. 1925, AA A461/1 D422/1/8

interests of listeners. He added that the existing policy was equitable, given that each of the three federal parties was provided with equal opportunity to broadcast speeches in each state. Bruce had made his own policy speech from Brisbane's Exhibition Hall on 12 October 1925; it was broadcast by 4QG.¹³⁸

The following March saw the policy of three party speeches come under added criticism: the Queensland opposition to the Labor Government comprised the Independent Nationalist Party, the Independent Country Party, the Country Party, the Nationalist Party, and the Country and Progressive Nationalist Party.¹³⁹ McCormack facetiously asked for advice about which three parties to choose, and was advised by H.P. Brown, Secretary of the PMG's Department, that three politicians representative of the various interests should speak. However, Brown suggested privately to Bruce that "in view of the information contained in the premier's telegram it is suggested that the broadcasting of one speech only should be allowed from the government nominee and a nominee representing jointly the opposition parties."¹⁴⁰

Another issue connected with state politics and broadcasting emerged towards the end of 1925. The Council of Agriculture approached Robinson and asked for permission to broadcast a lecture in favour of the formation of an egg pool. The egg pool was a co-operative venture to assist farmers in marketing their eggs. Some Queensland farmers strongly advocated this, although others strongly opposed the proposal. Robinson was in favour of the broadcast (if not the pooling concept), but

¹³⁸WW, 6 Nov. 1925, p. 13.

¹³⁹Telegram from McCormack to Prime Minister, 30 Mar. 1926, AA A461/1 D422/1/8

¹⁴⁰Memorandum from Brown to PM's Secretary, dated 9 Apr. 1926, AA A461/1 D422/1/8

in correspondence to the Under Secretary said, "At the present time I am having a very difficult task in attempting to keep the station clear of any charges to the effect that it is being used for propaganda purposes."¹⁴¹ The matter was referred to the Premier, Gillies, who failed to approve the suggestion.

Robinson seems often to have encountered a tension between complying with the wishes of the Queensland Government (and those of organisations sympathetic to Labor) and adhering to federal wireless regulations regarding propaganda control. In 1927 he again wrote to the Under Secretary on the subject of broadcast lectures. He had suggested to the Acting Premier the desirability of obtaining a printed copy of each lecture at least two days prior to the proposed broadcast date to guard against potential problems, and indicated to the Under Secretary that a difficulty had emerged with the Queensland Preference League. Robinson stressed that regardless of personal opinion (including his own), broadcasting regulations must be obeyed unquestioningly:

These laws and regulations are very, very strict in regard to the broadcasting of any matter which may contain any political views of any description, the rules being just so strict whether that political matter be either Labour or Nationalist. The Acting Premier will doubtless remember that on two or three occasions there has been considerable trouble in Queensland concerning political broadcasting.¹⁴²

Should 4QG contravene any of the regulations, Robinson warned, the PMG was likely to withhold some of the license fee revenue, which would seriously affect the operation of the station. The state government was forced to comply with the regulations and Robinson was relieved of official and personal responsibility for breaches of the regulations.

¹⁴¹Letter, 11 Dec. 1925, QSA 81/8

¹⁴²Letter, 5 July 1927, QSA 81/8.

On 15 July 1927 Mr F.H. Gilmore, Chairman of Directors of the South Johnston Co-operative Milling Company, alleged in the *Daily Mail* that 4QG had broadcast "serious misstatements" about an ongoing industrial strike.¹⁴³ He stated that the previous evening the station had broadcast that "the Australian Workers' Union organiser had been refused admittance to the mill's premises, and that a police officer had told him he had every right to enter the property."¹⁴⁴ Robinson wrote to the Under Secretary, explaining that Gilmore's accusations were "quite without foundation,"¹⁴⁵ and issued a press release denouncing the assertions. He stressed that 4QG's news services merely consisted of news items from the press, and as such the station could not be directly blamed for propagating misstatements on any matter. He added that other items of broadcast news on the South Johnstone dispute were allegations made by Gilmore himself, and closed by saying, "It is merely my duty to give the public a news service ... supplied by the already existing news organisations."¹⁴⁶

Religious broadcasting

An article in *Wireless Weekly* by Rev. F.H. Raward stated in 1926 that "church broadcasting has been for some time a regular institution. It is well past the experimental stages."¹⁴⁷ From its inception, the broadcasting of religious services was regarded as one of the most

¹⁴³For details of the circumstances see Fitzgerald 1984: 34.

¹⁴⁴*Daily Mail*, 15 July 1927.

¹⁴⁵Letter, 15 July 1927, QSA 81/8.

¹⁴⁶*Ibid.* (from press statement attached to letter).

¹⁴⁷*WW*, 3 Dec. 1926, p. 5.

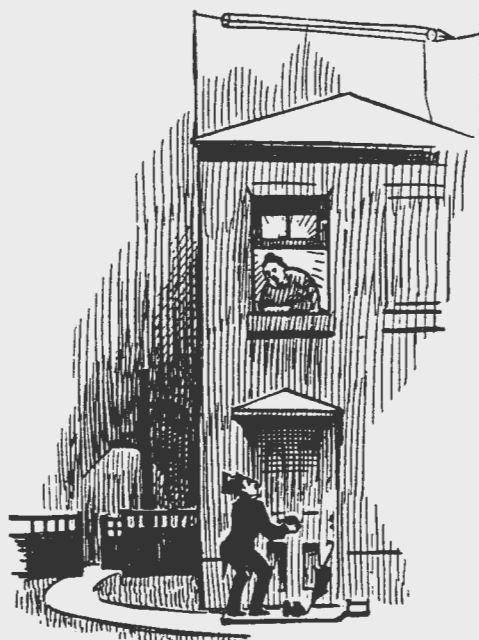
important of 4QG's activities. The term 'religious service' requires definition, however. Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist and Congregational churches seem to have been the only denominations offered broadcasting time. Fringe groups such as the Christadelphian Ecclesia, and "wandering evangelists" were given no encouragement at all to participate in the station's programmes¹⁴⁸ (one exception is the evangelist Gipsy Smith, who was broadcast over Sydney stations, and whose addresses promoted considerable comment in *Wireless Weekly*). Thus 'religious services' broadcast by 4QG referred only to those performed by Christian churches. Further, the term usually applied only to mainline, orthodox, metropolitan churches.

The station was linked by landline to the various participating churches, broadcasting time being allocated to each on the basis of census figures. The percentage of the population adhering to each denomination was taken, and these governed the time made available to the churches. For example, Church of England adherents represented 44 per cent of the state's population in 1929, so that denomination was given an equivalent percentage of 4QG's religious broadcasting time (Catholic Church figures for the same year amounted to 24 per cent). This method of allocating broadcasting time operated on the assumption that listeners' license figures had a direct relationship to church adherence figures; that is, Church of England supporters, for example, were not regarded as likely to take out more listening licenses than, say, Methodists. After the amount of time allowed for each church was determined, a yearly schedule was compiled and was circulated to the relevant churches, allowing them to organise their allocated times around their ecclesiastical

¹⁴⁸ *Souvenir 4QG 1925-1930*, p. 25; *4QG...Past Policy and Recommendations for the Future*, QSA A/6284 82/7, pp. 7,8.

calendars. When a church was unable to fulfil its responsibilities in supplying a suitable programme, churches which claimed a very low percentage of the population but had large city congregations and services well worth broadcasting (particularly the Baptist City Tabernacle and the City Congregational Churches) were provided with extra time.¹⁴⁹

According to the QRS, a healthy relationship developed between the station and the churches, and "with hardly an exception the clergy in charge of these churches [came] to realise the extreme value of the radio



Robinson 1926: 49

Cartoon from Wireless and the Settler

¹⁴⁹ 4QG...*Past Policy...*, op. cit., p. 8.

movement as applied to religious instruction."¹⁵⁰ However, a private report indicates that, although some churches realised the value of broadcasting their messages, their relationship with the QRS was often unhealthy:

The non-episcopalian clergymen of Brisbane have for some two or three years past endeavoured at intervals to have 4Q.G.'s policy upset and to have more than their quota of broadcasts allotted to their churches, but all these recommendations have been opposed and 4Q.G. has strictly adhered to the percentage system in the allocation of church broadcasts. Clergymen have been an almost perpetual source of worry to 4Q.G. With only one or two exceptions, all those whose services are broadcast have at some time or other approached the station with a view to explaining in some way or other why they should receive more transmissions at the expense of some other clergyman or denomination.¹⁵¹

Although many listeners appreciated religious broadcasts, the somewhat bigoted and competitive nature of Brisbane clergy led Robinson to wish that he could halt such programmes. Frequent attempts by clergymen to outmanoeuvre their opposition caused problems with the weekly schedule and wasted Robinson's time. Indeed, in a report to the Australian Broadcasting Commission in 1932, he stated that "I am opposed to the broadcasting of religious meetings under the guise of 'Pleasant Sunday Afternoons' or 'Midday Addresses'" by ministers of religion during the week.¹⁵²

When QRS officers compiled the annual programme schedule, care was taken to match airtime for certain churches with Sundays on which special events were planned. The first Sunday in every month, for example, was usually given to St Stephen's (Roman Catholic) Cathedral because special music was sung on that day; the Sunday on which the St John's Angl.can Cathedral Festival was held was allocated to that

¹⁵⁰*Souvenir 4QG 1925-1930*, p. 25.

¹⁵¹*4QG...Past Policy...*, op. cit.

¹⁵²Report on 4QG, in 'Reports - Queensland' file, ABCDA.

church; and All Saints' Sunday was given to the All Saints Church.¹⁵³ Apparently the station broadcast services from metropolitan churches only, except in extraordinary circumstances. This was natural, owing to problems associated with the laying of landlines and other technical difficulties. Laying of landlines to St Stephen's Cathedral required over ten miles of cable, but once laid they were semi-permanent. 4QG technicians installed three microphones at St Stephen's, at the pulpit, the choir and the sanctuary.¹⁵⁴ Five months after the permanent station opened, landlines linked 4QG with over 30 outside points, including fifteen individual churches.¹⁵⁵

In addition to local church services, prominent overseas visitors were given special opportunities to broadcast. In February 1927, the Anglican Bishop of London visited Australia and a service conducted by him was broadcast by 4QG from St John's Cathedral, as well as an address from the Exhibition Hall, arranged six months before he arrived.¹⁵⁶ Religious programmes on 4QG were restricted to Sundays, except for broadcasts by the Seventh Day Adventist Church (on Saturdays) and occasional special occasions, such as the visit of the (Catholic) Eucharistic Congress delegates to Brisbane, "where brilliant ecclesiastics from overseas delivered addresses of public interest in the form of sermons at mid-week services."¹⁵⁷

Religious broadcasting in the 1920s was seen as a step of progress in three respects. Firstly, it exposed the general listener to religious services

¹⁵³ *WW*, 2 Mar. 1928, p. 9; *4QG...Past Policy...*, op. cit., p. 8.

¹⁵⁴ *WW*, 27 Aug. 1926, p. 15.

¹⁵⁵ *WW*, 10 Sep. 1926, p. 8.

¹⁵⁶ *WW*, 10 Sep. 1926, p. 53.

¹⁵⁷ *4QG...Past Policy...*, op. cit., p. 8.

(both sermons and music), who may not otherwise have entered a church building. This served to legitimate and popularise religious themes, and to demystify the clergy, bringing them down to the same level as other voice broadcasters. Secondly, it provided a substitute for those who were ill and those in remote locations who were physically unable to attend a church service when they desired. Broadcasters were particularly sensitive to the needs of isolated listeners (the QRS especially so), and religious programmes were deemed to be intellectually stimulating and essential for national progress. *Wireless Weekly* noted that "the significance of church broadcasting for the dwellers outback is beyond words,"¹⁵⁸ and, more significantly still, the QRS noted that "truly the broadcasting of church services has linked men together in bands of brotherhood."¹⁵⁹ Finally, another important function of broadcast religious services was to give radio the right kind of legitimacy in Australian society. With such programmes, stations were permitted to broadcast on Sundays. Other forms of media were restricted from operating in Australia. Originally, Sunday newspapers were prohibited, and in 1909 a zealous Sunday observance lobby succeeded in severely restricting Sunday cinema screenings.¹⁶⁰ By using church services for programmes, stations satisfied those who claimed that broadcasters merely profaned the Sabbath; and other Sunday programmes met the entertainment needs of the remainder of listeners.

¹⁵⁸ *WW*, 3 Dec. 1926, p. 6

¹⁵⁹ *Souvenir 4QG*, op. cit., p. 25. Robinson also wrote a substantial article in *Wireless Weekly*, 4 Jan. 1929, pp. 5-6, entitled 'Religious broadcasting,' in which he outlined the various methods of organising religious programmes in the USA, England, Australia in general, and Queensland in particular.

¹⁶⁰ Collins 1987: 18.

Women's sessions

During the 1920s broadcasting stations began to realise that women, comprising perhaps half of all listeners, were a group for whom special programmes could be developed. 4QG aimed to serve rural listeners, and from its earliest days had provided programmes tailored to their perceived needs. Programmes for women also fitted conveniently into the station's philosophy of utilitarian broadcasting.

However, while occasional programmes were aimed at women, it was not until 1928 that 4QG commenced a daily women's session. The *Queensland Radio News* announced the station's commencement from 2 January, between 10.30 and 11.30 a.m..¹⁶¹ Women in Australian society were portrayed as 'home-makers,' 'housekeepers,' 'housewives' and 'child-raisers,' and the station built on these notions in its programmes. Robinson included in the programme a news service "of special interest to womenfolk," and "a short lecture upon some matter of feminine interest," interspersed with several musical items.¹⁶² Previously, 4QG had broadcast a number of talks for women during early evening sessions, but Robinson thought that these were given "at a time when most women were busily engaged in attending to the duties of the home."¹⁶³ The new morning sessions were designed to alleviate this problem, being given at a time when women had a little more leisure time in their busy day.

¹⁶¹ *QRN*, 1 Dec. 1927, p. 13.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

According to a report by Robinson in 1929, 4QG was "the first station to institute a special morning session for womenfolk."¹⁶⁴ Whether this statement refers to stations throughout Australia is unclear, but he probably meant that. If it is correct, it was an innovation quickly introduced by other Australian stations, so that by the mid-1930s women's sessions were a normal part of a station's weekday morning schedule. Robinson enlisted the services of "a lady eminently fitted" - who remained anonymous - to act as announcer for the session, but he remained in control of all policy and content decisions. The decision to appoint a woman announcer was momentous for broadcasting. While women such as Mavis Macfarlane played such an integral part in 4QG's Bedtime Stories, they did not command the community respect of a news or music announcer. The "eminent lady," however, actually announced for a 'serious' adult programme. The British Broadcasting Corporation appointed its first female announcer, Giles Borrett, in 1933, and in the United States, the NBC's first woman announcer commenced work in 1935.¹⁶⁵

The 4QG programme was called *The Women's Hour*. By 1929 its session still consisted of general and social news and a short lecture, with musical items at intervals to prevent the programme from becoming too monotonous. Subjects dealt with in lectures included household hints, home decoration ideas, advice on crockery, gardening and homecrafts, talks on "Women's Work in International Affairs," and talks on the work of the National Council of Women, the Country Women's Association and the Young Women's Christian Association. Robinson especially welcomed contributions from members of the Country

¹⁶⁴ '4QG ... Past Policy...' report, p. 11, QSA 82/7.

¹⁶⁵ McKay 1988: 198.

Women's Association because he believed that such talks would help stimulate radio in country centres.¹⁶⁶ He also mentioned that "[s]ome prominent feminist leaders in Brisbane have contributed to 4.Q.G.'s programmes."¹⁶⁷ The programme remained popular with listeners into the 1930s.

¹⁶⁶ '4QG ... Past Policy ...' report, *op. cit.*

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

Chapter Three

Entertainment Programming

Stunts and novelties

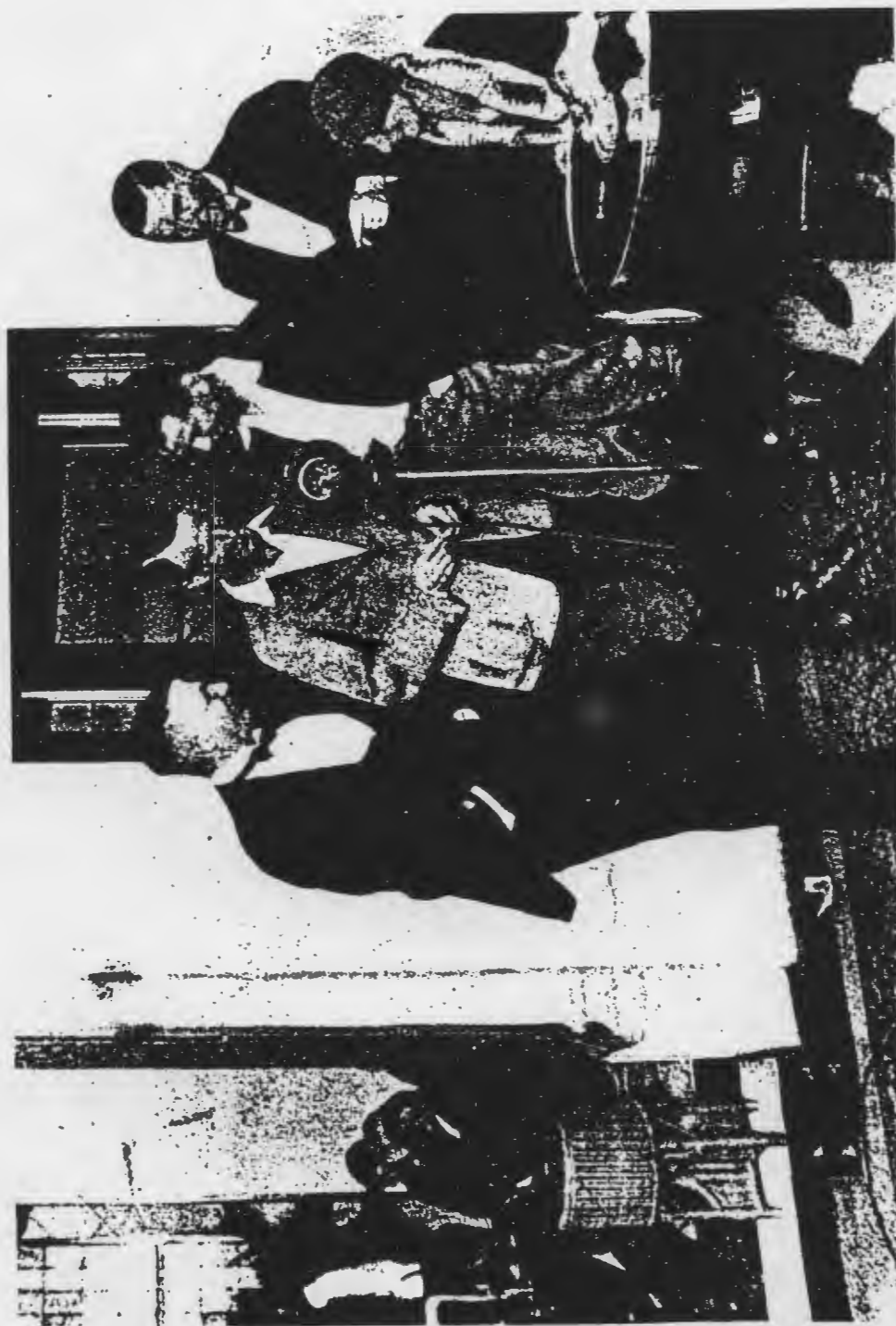
One of the peculiar characteristics of broadcasting in the 1920s was what was called 'stunt' broadcasts. They were often, arguably, devised to maintain an atmosphere of novelty and excitement after initial interest in the new technology had waned. Robinson acknowledged in June 1927 that "the first feeling of novelty had worn off."¹⁶⁸ Stunts were also undoubtedly successful in terms of entertainment value, and attracted publicity for the station. Wireless periodicals and newspapers delighted in reporting the strange and often innovative activities of broadcasting stations and their personnel. *Wireless Weekly*, for example, commenting on the popularity of these activities, said, "There is no type of transmission which seems to appeal more to listeners generally than the form of broadcasting known to most radio stations as 'stunts.'"¹⁶⁹ Robinson explained that his "novelty transmissions," as he called them, were carried out "in order to give the public some idea of the possibilities of radio."¹⁷⁰

Stunt broadcasts were also popular 4QG attractions due to the lack of variety in entertainment available in Brisbane at the time. Southern stations, especially the well-established ones in metropolitan Sydney and Melbourne, were able to draw on a much wider range of talent than could

¹⁶⁸QRS *Annual Report*, 1926-1927, p. 2.

¹⁶⁹WW, 25 Feb. 1927, p. 52.

¹⁷⁰QRS, op. cit., p. 3.



Collection: John Oxley Library, Brisbane

Bert Hinkler broadcasting from 4QG upon returning to Queensland

4QG, sometimes including overseas performers. This lack of variety prompted officers of the QRS to produce what were often unique and highly entertaining programmes.

The stunts broadcast from 4QG included a wide variety of events. The *Wireless Weekly* article quoted above describes some of 4QG's stunt broadcasts, and from the description it is evident that the term 'stunt' covered a wide scope. A selection of 4QG's stunts, some rather quaint by contemporary standards, are given below:

- Descriptions of marching bands from a stationery, footpath-mounted microphone in city streets. The stunt value seems to have been in the fact that the band music was heard by listeners at first faintly, then louder, then faintly again, giving the impression that they were actually part of the street crowd.
- A detailed description of Queen Street at night, including "incidental street noises." This would have been much appreciated by country listeners, whose imaginations may have conjured up images of a bustling capital filled with lights and constant motion. To hear, say, in Toowoomba, noises being made simultaneously in a Brisbane street, was something at which to marvel in 1926.
- The interesting feat of superimposing speech and music from two separate venues on the station's wavelength at the same time. Although 4QG was not the first station to effect this, it was congratulated on the high quality achieved. Apparently on numerous occasions the Hotel Carlton orchestra played a item of instrumental music while vocalists

sang in the station's studios, and these two sources were mixed and broadcast.

- A "Radio Motor Hunt," described by the *Queensland Radio News* as "one of the most novel transmissions yet effected in the Commonwealth." This was actually an elaborate publicity stunt, in which a QRS officer drove through Brisbane suburbs in a motor car, identified by a special blue light. At 8.00 p.m. the station broadcast the car's position, and listeners were invited to telephone the station reporting its exact position. Telephone lines were connected to the station's transmitter so that listeners' voices were broadcast. This seems to have been the first instance of 'talk-back' radio in Queensland; the idea had previously been tried in New South Wales by stations such as 2FC, but the PMG refused to allow the practice to continue, thinking it would interfere with other profitable means of communication, such as postal and telegraphic services. Listeners were asked to hail the driver and were handed cards, between 1500 and 2000 being dispersed. The cards were to be filled in and sent to the station, and prizes were offered to the first that were opened.¹⁷¹

- A broadcast from the bottom of Moreton Bay. Robinson, Stevens and seven others (including the editor of the *Daily Standard* and a movie photographer) went out to the Pile Light in a government steamer and effected a broadcast from 40 feet below the surface of the bay. The transmission lasted for 30 minutes and was relayed to shore by the Pile Light's submarine telephone cable. A good idea in theory, the broadcast was distorted by the noise of escaping air bubbles and the rhythmic beat of

¹⁷¹*QRN*, 1 Jan. 1927, p. 52.

the air pump from which the divers received air. However, it was "believed to have been listened to with breathless interest all over Australasia, and, if listeners did not get all the thrills that the diver (Stevens) tried to give them, they certainly gained a deal of information about the art of diving and its difficulties."¹⁷²

- A description of the printing of a magazine at the Read Press in Brisbane, using fully portable broadcasting apparatus and faithfully reproducing "all the noises made by the machines."¹⁷³
- A description of the works of the Brisbane City Electric Light Company from its new power house at Dougboy Creek.
- A description of the arrival and departure of steamers at the Brisbane docks; microphones were even taken down into the vessels' engine rooms and stokeholds.
- A description of events at the Royal National Show, "enabling people who were not able to attend to hear a description of such things as ring events."¹⁷⁴
- The transmission of a concert from the bottom of the main shaft at the No. 3 Colliery at Dinmore, near Ipswich.¹⁷⁵

Two observations may be made from these examples. Firstly, several draw on the notion of the conquest of distance by the new

¹⁷² *WW*, 24 Dec. 1926, p. 54.

¹⁷³ *WW*, 25 Feb. 1927, p. 7.

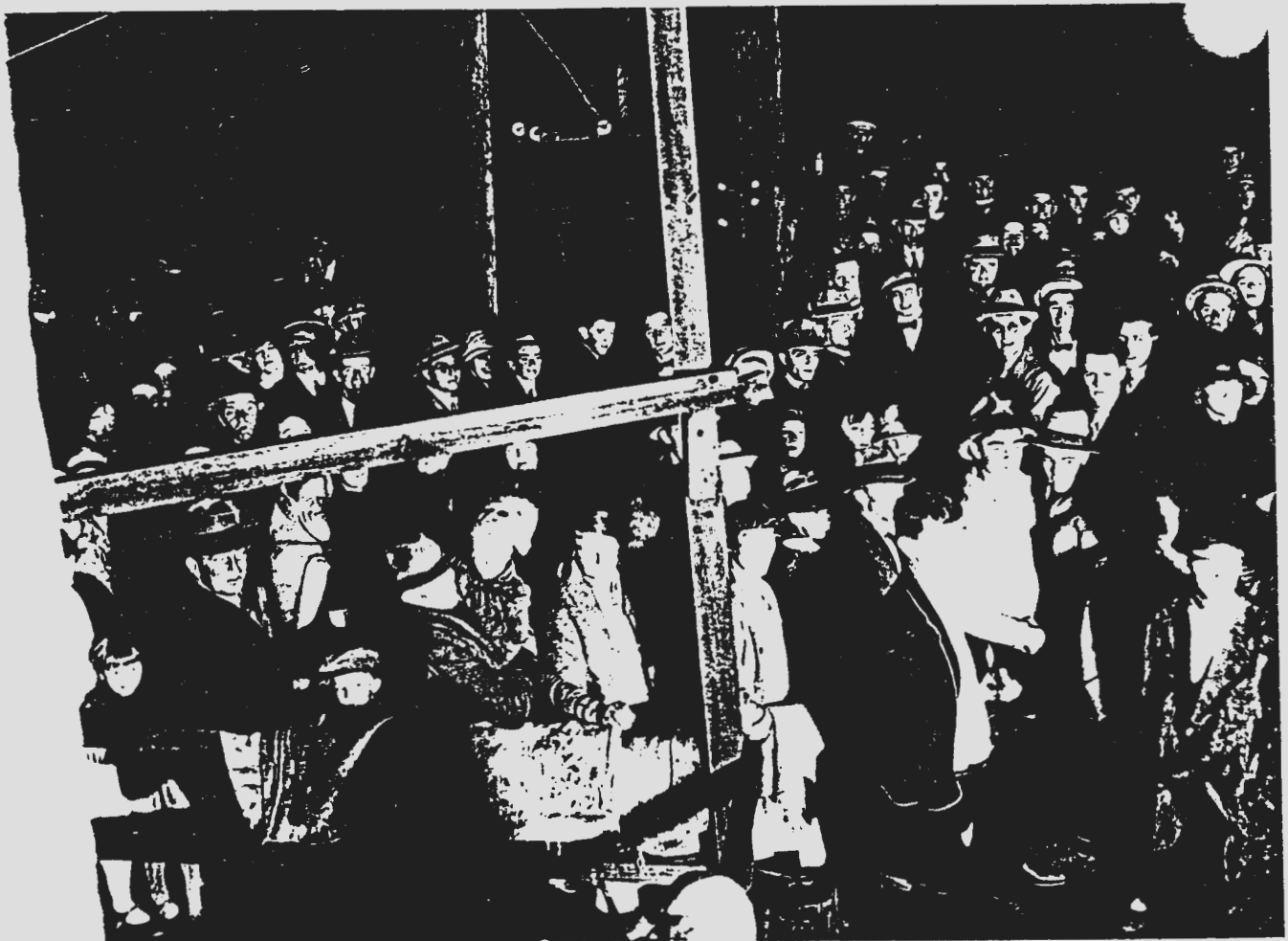
¹⁷⁴ *QRS*, op. cit., p. 3.

¹⁷⁵ *QRN*, 1 Jun. 1927, p. 46



Collection: John Oxley Library, Brisbane

Broadcasting from the bottom of No. 3 Colliery, Dinmore



Collection: John Oxley Library, Brisbane

medium. Secondly, underlying the stunts, especially earlier ones, is the desire to advertise the amazing new technology that was available to broadcasters, and the ways in which they were able to utilise it, purportedly for the sole benefit of listeners.

Bedtime stories and other children's programmes

Programmes compiled specifically for children were a feature of all radio stations in Australia in the 1920s, and were among the most popular of all programme genres. Children's programmes at 4QG were known by several names (titles included *Sessions For Little Listeners*, *Children's Sessions*, and *Kiddies' Sessions*), but were perhaps best known as *Bedtime Stories*. When the QRS began broadcasting in July 1925, *Bedtime Stories* were not included in the programme schedule, but the station was inundated with requests to begin broadcasting a Queensland version of children's entertainment. This indicates the popularity of the new 'radio habit' among Queenslanders who had previously 'listened-in' to interstate and perhaps overseas broadcasts, and had developed a liking for children's entertainment.

In response to these requests, Robinson explained that when the permanent station began operating, listeners could expect a nightly bedtime story, but while the temporary station was being used this would be impractical. To placate their aural appetites, he set aside part of the Sunday night schedule, from 7.00 to 7.30 p.m., for bedtime stories.¹⁷⁶ When the permanent station went into service,

¹⁷⁶ *QRN*, 1 September 1925, p. 11.

bedtime stories were broadcast each evening, with a special programme compiled for Sundays. Public appeals were made to listeners to determine the most appropriate time for these programmes; over 95 percent of responses favoured the period from 6.30 to 7.00 p.m., and this was made standard.¹⁷⁷

At the commencement of broadcasting in Australia (not exclusively at 4QG) it is apparent that no definite pattern for children's programmes existed, nor were any particular members of a station's staff designated the official task of managing these programmes. Any member of a station's staff who felt themselves capable of entertaining the younger listeners was encouraged to use his or her talents in that field. Children's programmes seem to have been viewed as somewhat less than glamorous in the early days of Australian radio, but as presenters established themselves as familiar and popular personalities, and as loyal audiences emerged, their status quickly improved. Australian stations followed the British habit of calling presenters 'uncles' and 'aunts,' but 4QG's first 'uncle' was known as 'The Sandman.' He was still with the station when it became part of the Australian Broadcasting Commission in 1932.

Robinson and his staff soon realised that children had highly diversified tastes in relation to entertainment. This was a problem that had to be overcome if children's programmes were to prove successful; the logical result was the provision of a variety of entertainment suited to a range of ages and mental abilities. The

¹⁷⁷ 4QG...*Past Policy...*, p. 9, QSA A/6284 82/7.



Robinson 1926: 19

Two interested listeners to 4QG's *Bedtime Stories* in 1926

twenties at 4QG came to be characterised (in terms of this genre) by a plethora of entertainments: tales of fairies, school life, adventure, fantasy, animals, legends, folk tales, excerpts read from books, the relating of great achievements of men and women "who had written their name prominently upon the life of various nations," songs, nursery rhymes, simple ballads and choruses "which the youngsters could quickly memorise," verse, playlets, concert parties, ventriloquial acts and "little features of variety, which could be included without being harmful or subversive" to the minds and hearts of the little listeners.¹⁷⁸

With the opening of the permanent station, different nights were allocated to different children's entertainers, allowing listeners to tune in to their favourite personalities while not being forced to listen-in every night in the hope of hearing them. The Sandman and his mysterious assistant 'Percy' (the product of The Sandman's powers of ventriloquism) were given Mondays, Thursdays and

¹⁷⁸ABC Yearbook 1930, p. 55.

Fridays; 'Uncle Ben' was given Tuesdays and Saturdays (on Tuesdays he was accompanied by a blind assistant, 'Stanley,' and on Saturdays by 'Brighteyes'¹⁷⁹ and 'Grandfather'); 'Little Miss Brisbane,' 'Bebe' and 'Bunty' looked after Wednesday evenings.¹⁸⁰ The Sandman, Little Miss Brisbane and Brighteyes were employed by the station, while the remainder offered their services voluntarily. When he was not entertaining children, Uncle Jim was C.V. Woodland, 4QG's announcer. Uncle Ben, Director of a Brisbane company, freely offered his assistance as a children's entertainer "purely out of love for his work."¹⁸¹

The Sunday evening session was initially set aside for personal calls to listeners and a religious programme for children. The former consisted of a series of messages and birthday greetings to children. Listeners were invited to write to the station, giving their name and telling their favourite 'uncles' and 'aunts' about their conduct, habits and behaviour, and their date of birth. Special 'thank you' cards were sent to each listener who wrote. The station kept a 'Birthday Book' of this information, and each week the names of those who had had birthdays in the past seven days had the privilege of hearing their name on the wireless. This had a two-fold purpose: it strengthened the bond between the station and its audience, and provided useful information on the number of children listening to programmes. For the religious content on Sunday nights, metropolitan churches were asked to provide a

¹⁷⁹'Brighteyes,' Gladys Cooling, was the young daughter of 4QG's first newsreader who died tragically in 1927; Robinson organised a trust for his widow from listeners' donations, and employed his daughter to help provide an income for the family. She also worked at the temporary station in 1925.

¹⁸⁰*Souvenir 4QG 1925-1930*, p. 21.

¹⁸¹*4QG...Past Policy...*, p. 9.

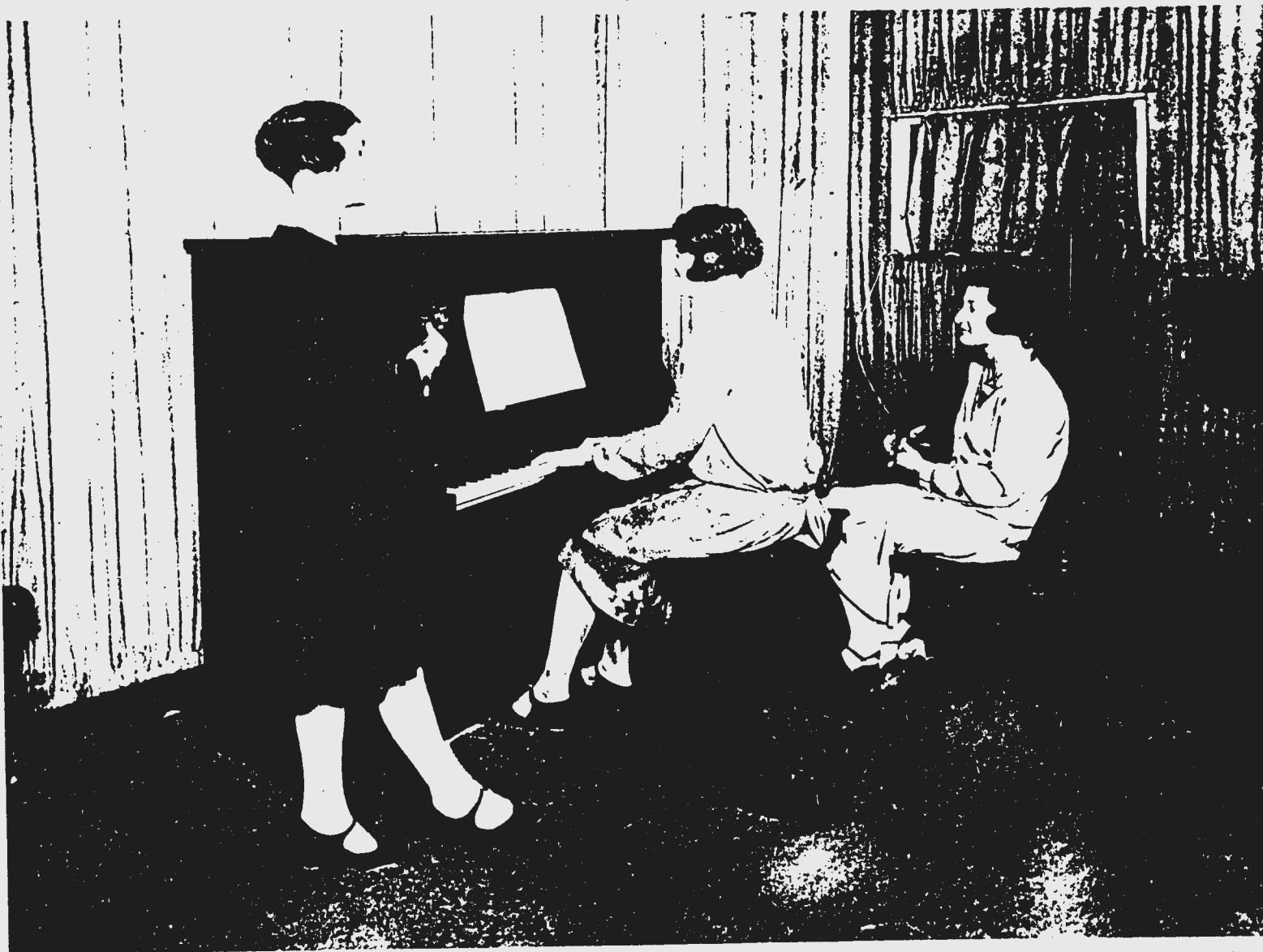


Photo courtesy G.P.O. Museum

'Little Miss Brisbane' and friends broadcasting from the permanent station

suitable service; some acquiesced and regularly provided adequate children's programmes, while the balance was provided by 4QG from the studios.¹⁸²

Little Miss Brisbane, alias Mavis Macfarlane, was originally Robinson's administrative secretary, but soon developed an interest in bedtime stories. Her "sweet winsome personality and her low quiet voice"¹⁸³ propelled her to national fame and gave her some of the happiest years of her life.¹⁸⁴ By July 1926, Little Miss Brisbane was receiving "hundreds" of letters from all parts of Australia, and "a constant stream of correspondence" from her admirers in New Zealand,¹⁸⁵ illustrating the fact that 4QG broadcasts reached a far greater audience than merely listeners in southern Queensland and northern New South Wales. In April 1927 the *Queensland Radio News* claimed that Macfarlane received a significant proportion of 4QG's daily mail.¹⁸⁶

Macfarlane produced *Bedtime Stories*, a programme described as "unique, entertaining and educational."¹⁸⁷ It included a bedtime story band, "how to make a 4QG pudding" (which, as well as giving a recipe, provided "many favourite musical and recitation numbers"), and readings from the book, *Peter Pan*.¹⁸⁸ She was also well known for her original stories, 'Bedtime Band' and 'Blue Bird Orchestra.' She also embarked on a scheme to encourage children to write better

¹⁸² *Souvenir 4QG*, op. cit., p. 23.

¹⁸³ *QRN*, 1 Apr. 1927, p. 46.

¹⁸⁴ Miller, M. (1959), typescript, Fryer Memorial Library, University of Queensland. Mavis Miller was Mavis Macfarlane prior to her marriage.

¹⁸⁵ *WW*, 23 July 1926, p. 14.

¹⁸⁶ *QRN*, 1 April 1927, p. 46.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

letters. They were asked to write to the station, and the best three letters were read on air during the programme. The manager of Metro Goldwyn Films Ltd, a regular listener to 4QG, donated a framed photograph of Jacky Coogan to the station, to be presented to the boy or girl who wrote the best letter to Little Miss Brisbane.¹⁸⁹

4QG bedtime storytellers also appeared live to audiences of school children and the general public on special occasions. In 1927, for example, personalities visited the Ascot State School and the Ipswich Town Hall. The latter visit was organised by W. Haigh & Company, an Ipswich firm. Long before the 6.30 p.m. start the hall was filled to capacity, and a large crowd had gathered outside. Uncle Ben and his assistants drove onto the stage in a "very ancient and noisy Ford that stopped rather suddenly and threw the poor old 'Professor' over the tailboard."¹⁹⁰ Uncle Jim rode in on a cream-coloured pinto, Tony, who shook hands with and kissed his master, much to the delight of the audience. The QRS organised a Radio Exhibition in 1928, during which the station's bedtime storytellers entertained a total of over 32,000 people in twelve nightly performances.¹⁹¹ These live appearances served to link the aural perception of the entertainers, constructed in the minds of listeners, to physical entities. They also provided massive publicity at relatively little expense for the station and its individual personalities.

¹⁸⁹ *WW*, 17 September 1926, p. 15.

¹⁹⁰ *QRN*, 1 October 1927, p. 31.

¹⁹¹ *4QG...Past Policy...*, *op. cit.*, p. 10.



Collection: John Oxley Library, Brisbane

'Little Miss Brisbane' presenting a prize to a young listener

By 1932, the following children's entertainment was broadcast by 4QG:

- Sunday:** the abovementioned special session, conducted by various groups of storytellers and including personal calls.¹⁹²
- Monday:** The Sandman conducted a Boy's Club, with a representative from the Model Aeroplane Association, suitable for boys between the ages of seven and fourteen.
- Tuesday:** Uncle Ben and his two assistants provided a variety programme for boys and girls aged between five and ten years old.
- Wednesday:** The Sandman and Percy provided material described by the ABC as "mostly nonsense."
- Thursday:** Bebe and Bunty provided a musical/fairy story session for young children, particularly girls.
- Friday:** Uncle Ben and assistants, this time catering "mainly for older children."
- Saturday:** The Sandman and Vince (another doll?) entertained all ages with a musical session.¹⁹³

Robinson gave considerable thought to the value of bedtime stories for educational purposes. He concluded that to make them "purely educational" would destroy much of their appeal to young listeners. However, he decided that valuable educational material could usefully be incorporated into the sessions, and explained by illustration what he meant:

¹⁹²It seems that religious services for children had disappeared, although this may not entirely have been the case.

¹⁹³ABC, "Outline of activities," in 'Reports - Queensland' file, ABCDA.

It is safe to assume that many children would refuse to listen to an educational lecture on "The Habits of Crabs in Moreton Bay." Yet let a group of bedtime storytellers plan a radio "trip" down Moreton Bay and "put it over" with suitable effects, and an interest would be taken. Educational matter relating the habits of Moreton Bay crabs could be "worked-in".¹⁹⁴

The relative size of the 4QG children's audience seems to have been large, from comments made in a variety of sources. An index of this was provided when, at one time, the station received more than ten thousand letters in response to a children's competition.¹⁹⁵

Despite the occasional special educational programmes for children and frequent learning activities in general children's programmes, 4QG did not pursue organised educational or school broadcasts in collaboration with the Department of Education. In 1925 the Federation of Australian Teachers passed a resolution in favour of radios in schools,¹⁹⁶ but it is unclear whether this was for general purposes or for the production of specific programmes designed to teach children in the classroom. Early attempts to broadcast to remote areas of Queensland did not develop into a feasible educational component of the weekly schedule. The plan to situate receivers in local schools (see chapter four) also failed to prove successful. Most Australian stations encountered similar problems with educational programmes. The *Telegraph* commented in 1927 that "little use is able to be made in Australia of the development of wireless for educational purposes."¹⁹⁷ The Teachers' Federation insisted upon the importance of broadcasting for child education. Politicians stressed their belief that stations

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ *WW*, 16 Oct. 1925, p. 48.

¹⁹⁷ *Telegraph*, 16 Feb. 1927, p. 11.

should receive financial assistance to enable them to reach outback areas with educational programmes. Neither of these two groups achieved their desired goals.¹⁹⁸

Perhaps this failure was in part because teachers and educationalists feared that they may become obsolete in competition with broadcasting. 2FC began educational sessions in 1924, but discontinued them late the same year. When, in September 1925, the station decided to resume these sessions, it met with vigorous opposition from the NSW Education Department. This was because wireless was being discussed as a truthful and unbiased medium,

free from the views and provincialism always present in any country school ... It has not the dry-ness of book-learning to contend with; its presentations are not coloured with possibly narrow and personal views ... but coming right from the State's centre of learning, it offers in an unadulterated form the best the country possesses.¹⁹⁹

Such critical rhetoric would certainly have antagonised educationalists, and perhaps similar misunderstandings were behind 4QG's failure to develop a regular educational programme for children at school. Another benefit of broadcasts educational programmes was the advantage to people who had had limited schooling themselves. Such people, especially in country areas, may have significantly benefited from learning programmes, even those of a 'general knowledge' nature.

One area of educational broadcasts which did receive positive institutional response was the giving of University talks by 4QG. These were discussed in chapter two, but it is useful to comment

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ *WW*, 9 Oct. 1925, p. 26.

further on them here. Although these talks took place on a casual basis from 1925, in 1927 the University of Queensland officially arranged for Professors to give regular lectures on 4QG. These talks were supported by the station because they enhanced its reputation for prestige and authority. However, they were hardly acceptable for educating children, and were usually broadcast after eight o'clock, when most children of school age were asleep.

Sport broadcasts

When 4QG first began broadcasting, sporting events were not seen as an important part of the service. However, they were introduced soon after the station opened, and once established the genre quickly gained prominence as a popular attraction for listeners. Most sport broadcasts were transmitted on Saturdays, for that was the only day that people were free to attend venues or participate in games. Sunday sports were still not allowed, nor were broadcasts of such events. Little information relating to sport broadcasts exists in QRS papers, and they are not mentioned in QRS Annual Reports until 1929. However, sports that are mentioned are horse racing, cricket, rugby league and motor cycle racing. Other sports may have been broadcast, perhaps irregularly, but they are not mentioned in official papers or in wireless journals.

Racing broadcasts were by far the most popular of 4QG's regular sport programmes. In the 1920s Brisbane had three race clubs (the Queensland Turf Club, the Brisbane Amateur Turf Club and Tattersall's Club), and races were held on each Wednesday and Saturday, and also on public holidays. From 1925 to late 1928 all events were described from all

race meetings, according to a report written by Robinson in 1932. Descriptions were made by a trackside announcer from 4QG, linked to the station by landline. Although many listeners enjoyed racing broadcasts, others would probably turned off their receivers and registered complaints about their regularity, and still others would have preferred a seat at the track.

Race broadcasts continued smoothly until late in 1928, when all three race clubs withdrew from 4QG the right to broadcast any material from inside their racecourses. This was because officials were worried that former racegoers were boycotting the gates in favour of listening to 4QG's race broadcasts and accompanying information in the comfort of their homes. Robinson immediately decided to commence broadcasting from elevated positions outside the various venues, but the Premier, McCormack, refused permission for the station to do this.²⁰⁰ Hence for a little over 12 months 4QG broadcast no races. Queensland listeners were deprived of the opportunity of hearing live descriptions of races and were forced to attend race meetings in person. This was too great a burden for Brisbane residents, but listeners outside the metropolitan area were denied a service for which many had purchased receiving sets. An indication of listeners' disapproval of the action may be gauged by the fact that during the period in which race broadcasts were discontinued, almost 4000 listeners' licences were cancelled in Queensland.²⁰¹ This situation continued until the Australian Broadcasting Company took control of 4QG's programming services. Early in 1930 the Company approached the race clubs and after lengthy negotiations the clubs permitted the station to broadcast within racecourses again, subject to

²⁰⁰ 'Outline of Activities,' in 'Reports-Queensland' file, ABCDA.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

certain restrictions. These confined 4QG announcers to describing races from the rise of the barrier to the finish. Before the ban on race broadcasts was introduced, race broadcasts had included the names of starters, barrier positions, scratchings, jockey's names and betting and tote dividends. Despite the lack of background information, listeners approved of the reintroduction of race broadcasts. Although other factors were involved, after the reintroduction, licence figures were not only regained, but were substantially increased.²⁰²

Cricket broadcasts were also popular with listeners. Although these became almost a national institution in the 1930s and 1940s, 4QG's broadcasts of major games and test matches received wide acclaim and gave much pleasure to listeners. In 1929 the Queensland Cricket Association granted exclusive broadcasting rights of cricket matches to 4QG. This allowed 4QG to broadcast full descriptions of play, interviews of players and perform any other activities it thought were advantageous to the game. The station was not required to pay any fee or give the Association a percentage of the advertising revenue from game broadcasts. However, by 1932 this was common practice. The same was true for most other sports suitable for broadcasts.²⁰³

Another popular sport for 4QG was rugby league. Originally the station was allowed to broadcast descriptions of all matches of the Brisbane Rugby Football League and the Queensland League. By 1929 however, the latter had changed its attitude to broadcasting and refused 4QG permission to broadcast description of its important fixtures.²⁰⁴ As

²⁰² *Ibid.*

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ QRS Annual Report, 1928-29, p. 3.

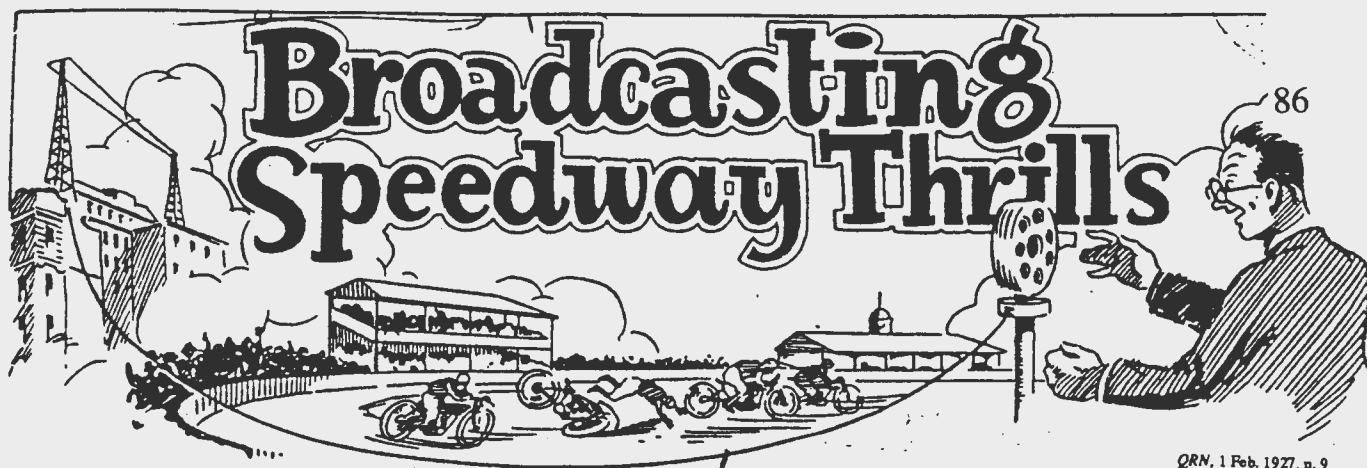
was the case with race broadcasts, this was probably the result of decreasing attendances at matches. When broadcasting a major rugby league game or cricket match, 4QG did more than describe the actual game. Announcers provided listeners with background information about teams, statistics on previous games and weather conditions. Mr. Stan Phillips, Secretary of the Queensland League, often acted as an announcer for the station at major games.²⁰⁵ Usually team captains were asked to go to the studio before a game where an announcer would introduce them to listeners.²⁰⁶ This provided publicity for the games and the sporting bodies. It proved popular with listeners, especially those outside Brisbane who enjoyed spectator sports but could rarely sacrifice time and money to be present at fixtures. Descriptions of Queensland games were broadcast throughout Australia by 4QG, and the most important ones were relayed by landline to southern stations and rebroadcast.

According to the *Queensland Radio News*, the most thrilling of all special broadcasts by 4QG were descriptions of motor cycle races broadcast from the National Speedway at the Brisbane Exhibition Grounds. A permanent landline connected the station with the grounds ("fixed to a post just in front of the John McDonald Grandstand").²⁰⁷ From the beginning of 1927, descriptions of these races were a weekly feature of sport broadcasts. It was probably Robinson's fascination for cars and motor cycles as well as a positive response of listeners, that led to this. The *Queensland Radio News* explains the context of these broadcasts:

²⁰⁵ *QRN*, 1 Jun., 1927, p. 46.

²⁰⁶ 'Outline of Activities,' in 'Reports - Queensland' file, ABCDA.

²⁰⁷ *QRN*, 1 Feb. 1927, p. 9.



Cartoon of broadcasting speedway thrills

A vivid description of the races is broadcast from the trackside, which, to the accompaniment of the crescendo and the diminuendo of the roaring machines as they race around the track make the transmission very realistic and thrilling.²⁰⁸

The microphone was placed in the centre of the ring facing the starting and finishing post, giving the announcer a good view of the race. Robinson himself announced many of the races.²⁰⁹

Music and copyright fees

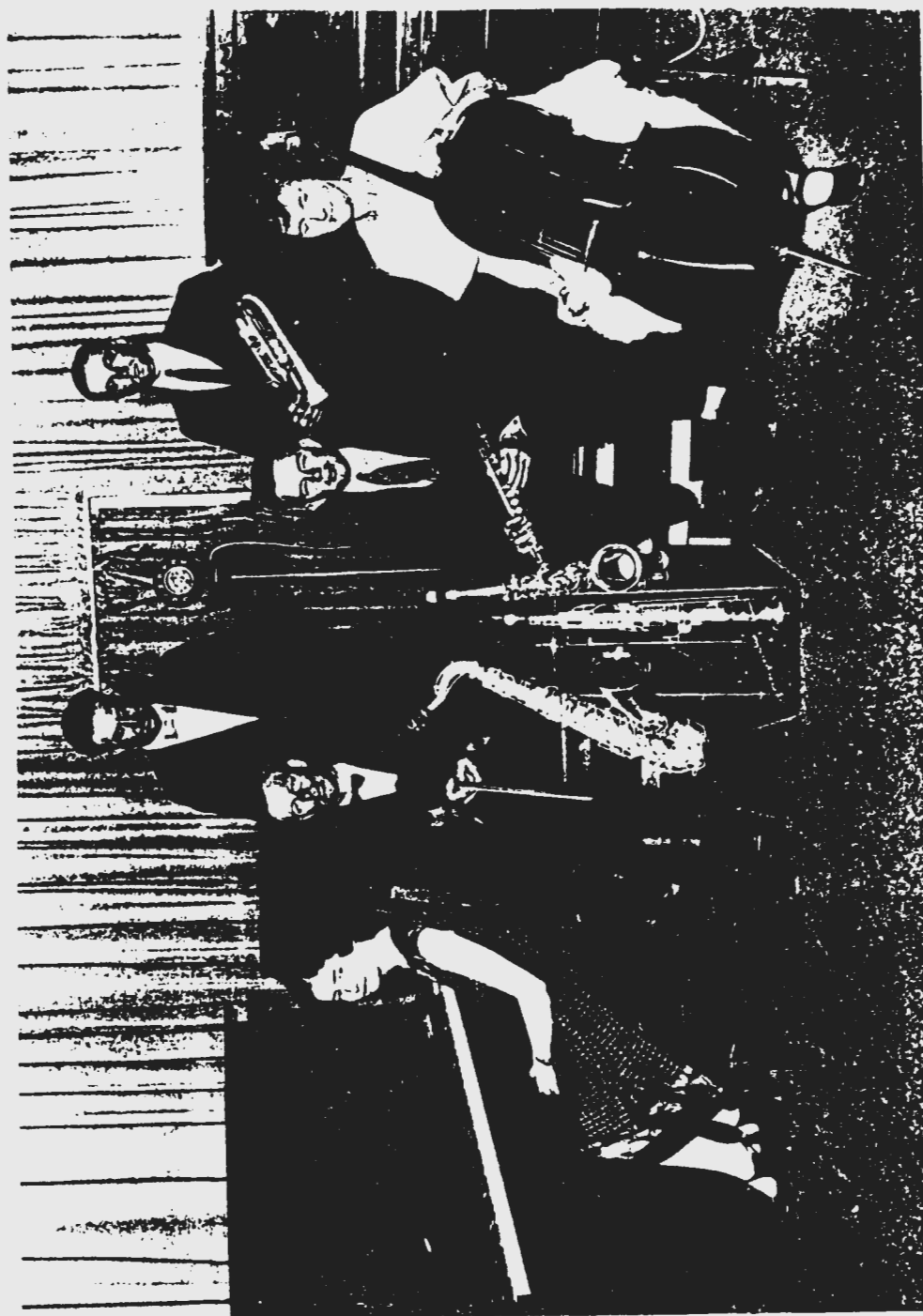
The *Age* commented in 1923 that "‘broadcast music’ is ... a simple and intelligible label for a magic as marvellous as any that could be imagined."²¹⁰ Although not couched in precisely the same terms, music was undoubtedly one of 4QG's most popular broadcasts. The schedules listed in chapter two show that studio concerts, band recitals and outside music events filled more broadcast time than any other genre. *Wireless Weekly* noted that "only high-class talented artists are engaged by the management of

²⁰⁸'Outline of Activities,' in 'Reports - Queensland' file, ABCDA.

²⁰⁹*Ibid.*, p. 10.

²¹⁰*The Age*, 31 Mar. 1923.

4QG."²¹¹ From 1925 to 1930 the station maintained a mixture of classical and popular music in its music programmes. Jazz music enthralled some sections of the listening population and infuriated



Collection: John Oxley Library, Brisbane

4QG's first orchestra, in the large studio

²¹¹ WW, 13 Nov. 1925, p. 32.

Daily Record of Musical Items

BROADCASTING SERVICE
STATION 4 Q.C., Brisbane.

Date of Transmission Monday 13th January, 1930.

Item No.	TITLE	COMPOSER	PUBLISHER	NATURE OF WORK (Form of Rendition)	N/C
1	Honour and Arms	Handel	H.M.V.	Bass.	X
2	Wedding Bells	Kahal	Alberts	Orchestra.	
3	What'll You Do	Miller	Allans.	Vocal.	
4	March on a Throne of Handel	Guilmant	M.C.P.S.	Organ.	
5	Carmencita	Merton	Suttons	Vocal.	
6	The Mastersingers of Nuremberg	Wagner	H.M.V.	Orchestra.	X
7	A Precious Little Thing	Davis-Coots	Davis	"	
8	Lily of Laguna	Stuart	M.C.P.S.	Organ.	
9	I'm Thirsty for Kisses	Davis-Coots	Alberts	Orchestra.	
10	I Miss You Lise	"	H.M.V.	Tenor	
11	The Magic Flute - Overture	Mozart	H.M.V.	Orchestra.	X
12	That Melody of Love	Diets-Donaldson	Allans	Band.	
13	Kaiser Waltz	Stouss	Parlophone	Orchestra.	X
14	Love's Garden of Roses	Rutherford	Chappell	Tenor.	
15	I'm Bringing a Red Red Rose	Kahn	Albert	Orchestra.	
16	The sun is at My Window	Davis	Davis	Vocal.	
17	In the Heart of the Sunset	Nicholls	Lawrence Wright	Organ.	
18	A Miniature Concert Parts 1 & 2	"	B. & Co.	Concert (record)	
19	Avalon Town	Grant	Allan	Orchestra.	
20	Forever	Tollen	Davis	Vocal.	
21	Love Dreams	Harris	Albert	Orchestra.	
22	Just for a Smile	Dudley	Parlophone	Orchestra.	
23	Redskin	Kerr	Sam Fox	Soprano.	
24	Vienna by Night	Komak	H.M.V.	Orchestra.	
25	Serenade	Schubert	Columbia	Tenor.	X
26	No Kalythe Volens	"	Columbia	Orchestra.	
27	Lilac Time ③	Cluteam	Chappell	"	
28	La Cinquantaine	Maide	Columbia	'Cello.	
29	Some of these days	Brookes	Albert	Orchestra.	
30	Pagan Love Song	Brown	Albert	"	
31	The Sun is at Window	"	Davis	"	
32	Liebestraum	Liszt	Boosey	"	
33	Bukiding a nest for Mary	Rose	Davis	"	
34	Jericho	Heyers	Chappell	"	
35	Sweetheart of all my Dreams	Love	Albert	"	
36	Running wild	M.S.S.	M.S.S.	"	
37	San	"	"	"	
38	Oh Boy what a Girl	"	"	Banjo.	
39	My Sin is Loving you	Henderson	Albert	Orchestra.	
40	Dance of the Paper Dolls	Siras	Albert	"	
41	I can't give you anything but Love	Lovefields	Mills	"	
42	Danube Waltz	Strauss	Melodee	Pianola.	X
43	Wedding Bells	Fain	Alberts	Orchestra.	
44	There is a Happy Land	Akst	Davis	"	
45	My Ain Folk	Lemon	Falings	Baritone	
46	Some Time	Florito	Alberts	Orchestra.	
47	I'm Going Back to Nebraska	Murn	Campbell Connolly	Pianola.	
48	There's a Rainbow	Dreyer	Berlin	"	
49	Melody that Made you Mine	Polla	Alberts	Orchestra.	
50	Dream of the Dance	McLellan	Witmark	"	

Signed on behalf of Station *Currie*

The items not marked with a X are claimed by AUSTRALASIAN PERFORMING RIGHT ASSOCIATION LTD., as works of which it controls the copyright

No. of Copyright Works *Resel Page*

Signed on behalf of 'Australasian Performing Right Association Ltd.,

Daily Record of Musical Items

BROADCASTING SERVICE

STATION 4 G.G., Brisbane.

Date of Transmission Monday January 13th, 1930 (Contd.)

Item No.	TITLE	COMPOSER	PUBLISHER	NATURE OF WORK (Form of Rendition)	N/C
1	Don't be Cruel to a Vegetabuel	Carong	Francis Day	Comedy.	
2	Sylvia	Speaks	Schirmer	Vocal.	
3	Long Long Ago	Steckmest	Fischer	Flute.	
4	Lolita	Buzzi Peccia	M.S.S.	Tenor.	
5	Where my Caravan	Lohr	Chappell	Vocal.	
6	Liebestrauma	Liszt	Jacobs	Orchestra.	
7	I Love My Love	Clarke	Chappell	Soprano.	
8	Nocturne	Donza	Aschorberg	Vocal Duet.	
9	More Fraternity	Filmore	Filmore Bros.		
10	Hush Yo Honey Hush	Parks	Parks	Vocal.	
11	Barcarolle	Offenbach	Columbia	Cello.	
12	Robin Adair	Steckmest	Fischer	Flute.	
13	Fairy Lullaby	Quilter	Chappell	Soprano.	
14	Una	Hartmann	Hawkes	Cornet.	
15	Sea Life	Batten	Beoney	Baritone.	
16	Aldershot Command			Feldman & Alberts.	
17	Gems from Pagliacci	Looncavallo	H.M.V.	Vocal.	
18	You're Just a Little Bit of Everything Flippen	Davis	Davis	Orchestra.	
19	In a Little Town	Donaldson	Alberts		
20	Invitation to the Waltz	Weber	H.M.V.	Piano.	X
21	Twelve o'clock at Night	Rose	Ager, Bornstein	Orchestra	
22	Egyptian Rose	Snyder	Waterson Berlin		
23	Somewhere	Akst	Davis		
24	Love is Just a Flower	Schonberg	Jack Mills	Orchestra.	
25	Little Old Clock on the Mantel	Florito	Allans		
26	Love Sings a Song in My Heart	Cherniavsky	Allans		
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Signed on behalf of Station [Signature]

The items not marked with a X are claimed by AUSTRALASIAN PERFORMING RIGHT ASSOCIATION LTD., as works of which it controls the copyright

No. of Copyright Works 70

Signed on behalf of Australasian Performing Right Association Ltd.,

[Signature]
J.E.B.

others, but became more popular as the decade drew to a close. Hawaiian music was also popular with some listeners.²¹² As with sport, little information exists on music at 4QG in the 1920s, except for occasional press releases advertising coming attractions. For example, the *Queensland Radio News* announced in 1926 "the broadcasting of an hour's music by the Greater Brisbane Municipal Concert Band ... from the Band's practice rooms every Thursday night" between 9.00 and 10.00 p.m..²¹³ This band played to the public each Sunday night at Wickham Park. Music was often relayed by landline to 4QG and broadcast. According to *Wireless Weekly*, the Sunday night broadcasts resulted in letters of appreciation "from all parts of Australia and New Zealand."²¹⁴ The station also broadcast music programmes from the South Brisbane City Orchestra, the Ithaca Orchestral Society, the Federal Band and the Brisbane Apollo Club band.²¹⁵

In September 1926, 4QG and the Hotel Carlton were linked by landline. This allowed the station to broadcast the hotel's orchestral music.²¹⁶ It provided it with live, easily-accessible lunch hour and afternoon music. In the absence of a variety of gramophone records to play on air, the station needed to develop such links. Listeners often objected to frequent repetition of songs and artists. Developing greater variety in broadcast music meant that Robinson was plagued by less criticism from listeners and the Premier's Department. It also enhanced the station's reputation. Despite the continual flow of

²¹²*BB*, 6 May 1929, p. 1.

²¹³*QRN*, 1 Mar. 1926, p. 11.

²¹⁴*WW*, 23 Jul. 1926, p. 14.

²¹⁵*Ibid.*; *QRN*, 1 Mar. 1926, p. 11.

²¹⁶*WW*, 10 Sep. 1926, p. 53.

critical mail to the station and letters of complaint to the daily press, the QRS believed that its music programmes were of high standard and were beneficial to both listeners and musicians. Up to September 1929 4QG paid out £23,322 in fees to artists and musicians.²¹⁷ This money would not have been paid to them if it had not been established, so it made a direct contribution to the livelihood of up to a thousand local musicians and vocalists.

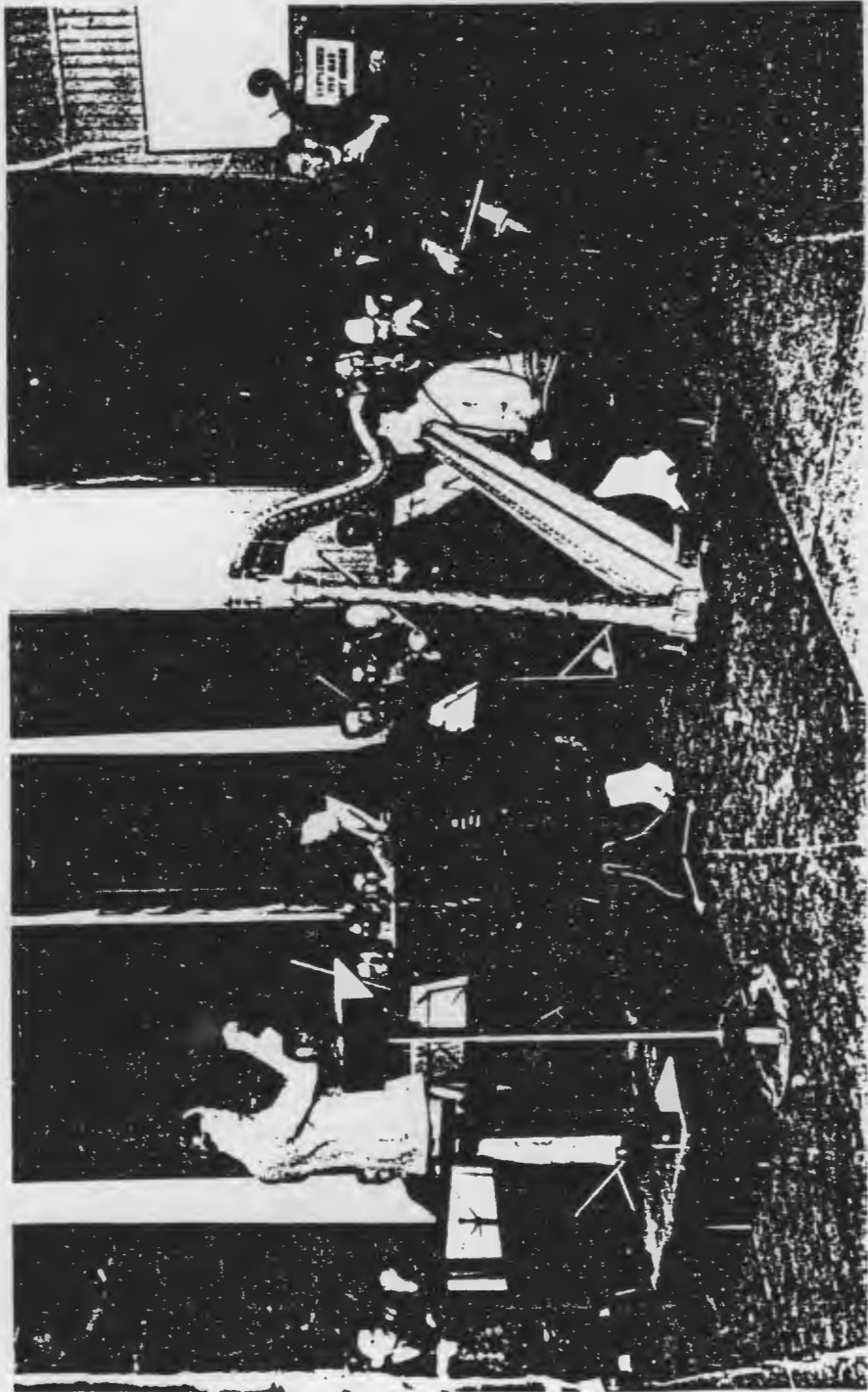
One major problem emerged with broadcasting music, however. By 1926 stations throughout Australia were being charged what Robinson termed "exorbitant" fees for the privilege of broadcasting copyright music. Realising the potential revenue that could be gained from stations, copyright owners formed the Australian Performing Rights Association (later Australasian) and began making heavy demands on broadcasters. The Association based its actions on legislation passed in relation to gramophone reproduction of music long before broadcasting commenced, forbidding "reproduction of music by mechanical means without the consent of the owners of the copyright."²¹⁸ APRA members subsequently refused any music to be broadcast without payment of fees.

In 1926 the APRA presented to 4QG an agreement with a request that it be signed. Its demands were that:

- a) The station is to be allowed to broadcast 8,400 musical works per year.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

²¹⁸ 'Royalties and Copyright Fees,' report by Robinson, 4 Jun. 1926, p. 2, QSA 81/10.



Collection: John Oxley Library, Brisbane

Orchestra performing for 4QC in 1929

- b) Ten per cent. of the revenue from listeners' licenses (after a sum not exceeding 3/6 paid to Amalgamated Wireless has been deducted) is to be paid to the Australian Performing Rights Association.
- c) For every 840 extra musical works used per year, an extra one per cent. of the revenue must be paid over.²¹⁹

This meant that up to 20% of 4QG's license fee revenue would be forfeited to the APRA. Robinson believed that copyright owners had a justifiable right to claim a fee, but that the presented claim was unquestionably exorbitant. He referred the matter to the Crown Law Office, but was told that the Association had a right to its claim. In a report on the subject, Robinson argued that the State Government should lobby the PMG to force the APRA into reducing the extent of its claims. He added that the charges were "restricting the public, crippling broadcasting stations and preventing the proper development of radio."²²⁰ Further, he believed that such claims on a public utility broadcaster such as 4QG would result (deliberately or otherwise) in failure to improve its service. As efforts to provide better programmes increased, charges and copyright demands would rise exponentially.

Whether the State Government acted on Robinson's suggestion is unclear, but the APRA continued to collect station revenue in the form of copyright fees. In 1928 the conditions were revised, becoming more strict and comprehensive. Listeners were becoming increasingly vocal in criticism of 4QG. This led the

²¹⁹ *Ibid*, p. 3.

²²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 4.

Telegraph to explain in October 1929 why certain music was played only rarely and other new items received no air time. This was due to rules laid down in 1928 by the APRA, including the following:

- prohibition from broadcasting vocal performance of numbers from musical plays;
- permission to broadcast instrumental numbers from musical plays produced in Australia prior to 3 September 1928;
- prohibition from broadcasting instrumental performance of numbers from musical plays produced in Australia since 3 September 1928 until 12 months from the original date of production in Australia;
- prohibition of broadcasting all plays not yet produced in Australia.
- permission to broadcast orchestral items or pianoforte solos from the grand operas, although arias may only be broadcast by special fee and arrangement;
- total prohibition of broadcasting vocal items from any Gilbert and Sullivan opera (instrumental, orchestral and band items were permitted).²²¹

These restrictions made it increasingly difficult for 4QG to broadcast recent works and to satisfy listeners' insatiable appetites for new and more varied musical entertainment. By 1930, however, stations had rationalised their position and constructed their schedules around the APRA restrictions, recognising their powerlessness to reject them. Listeners became accustomed to the restrictions and were more accepting of items that were broadcast.

²²¹*Telegraph*, 23 Oct. 1929, p. 12.

Advertising in radio's first decade

Commercial advertising was an integral part of every Australian broadcasting station's programmes during the 1920s. It was perceived as equivalent to advertising in newspapers and magazines, although as Ann Stephen notes, despite its rapid entry into the advertising market, radio failed to displace print media as the primary advertising medium.²²² When the QRS set up 4QG, advertising was simply viewed as a natural revenue source, and a service to listeners. The station's value as a public utility did not conflict with this.

Three weeks before 4QG began broadcasting, Robinson outlined proposed advertising plans for the station.²²³ They were designed as publicity to be circulated to the state's business houses, encouraging them to advertise on radio. For Robinson, wireless broadcasting was "the most wonderful and far reaching invention since the days of Caxton's first printing press"; it had come to stay, and businesses which failed to respond favourably would suffer. The publicity quotes licence figures and estimated listeners' numbers for New South Wales, and states that "[t]he spoken word, carried with the speed of light across countless miles of space, must make a vigorous appeal to all." Robinson attracted advertisers by appealing to the ubiquity and instant distribution potential of the new medium. During daytime sessions advertising was confined to a total of five minutes, but in the evening programme a similar period of five minutes was followed by a second period of ten minutes. These were strategically placed in the sessions to "ensure a maximum number of listeners being in touch with the station" when advertisements were

²²²Stephen 1981: 80.

²²³Letter, 5 July 1925, QSA 82/4. All quotes in this paragraph are from this letter.

broadcast. The notion of 'prime time' has changed little in the intervening 65 years.

Advertising rates in 1925 were ten shillings per minute for daytime sessions and £1 per minute for evening sessions. Advertisements usually ran for one minute and were of considerable variety.²²⁴ Items from July 1925 included "Orient," Goldenia tea, "jewel," biscuits, fish, ocean salt, "stiles," a sale at Allen & Stark, "eyes," sheep sales, Art Union and Casket advertisements, "Bugle Brand," "Motors," furniture, batteries (possibly for wireless sets), "radio - Busteeds," stock reports, farm produce, school publicity, and advertisements for the Cleveland and Mt Gravatt shows.²²⁵ By 1930, the range of advertisements had not changed.

Little discussion on the subject of radio advertising appears in QRS papers, or indeed in contemporary wireless periodicals. Perhaps it was rationalised as an essential and unproblematic aspect of the industry, and came to be accepted in the same way that newspaper advertising was accepted. Listeners voiced a constant stream of abuse toward stations over what they considered to be poor quality programming, but there seems to be little comparable criticism of advertisements. One critic of radio advertising, writing in the *Telegraph*, suggested eliminating advertisements from the night programme.²²⁶ *Wireless Weekly* refers on one occasion to "frequent perfervid outbursts against an alleged concealment of advertisement,"²²⁷ occurring in the press and in parliament. The article likens the critics to a "mosquito fleet of censors"

²²⁴QRS *Log of Advertisements*, 1925-1928 (QSA 96/7), 1928-1930 (JOL OM BT/2/1).

²²⁵*Ibid.*, 1925-1928 volume.

²²⁶*Telegraph*, 27 Oct. 1926.

²²⁷*Wireless Weekly*, 8 June 1926, p. 8.

It Pays to Advertise

Do YOU realise this to be a fact?

The more novel an Advertisement becomes the greater become its chances of success.

Radio Advertising is both novel and new.

Radio Advertising means that the actual spoken word is carried direct to the ears of thousands and thousands of people.

A strictly limited number of Advertisements will be received for transmission from Station 4QG, Brisbane.

Details will be supplied on request~

THE QUEENSLAND RADIO SERVICE

BROADCASTING STATION 4QG, BRISBANE.

QRN, 1925

4QG advertisement promoting station advertising, 1925

who pounce on the "exposed place" and "[suck] the blood of the broadcasting stations with almost ghoulish gusto"!

Among the 'B' stations beginning to emerge, there was general criticism of the PMG's Department policy of allocating licence fee revenue exclusively to 'A' stations while permitting them to advertise. 'B' stations saw this as an infringement on one of their revenue sources, but were powerless to lobby the Department at this stage. It was not until 1930 that a group of 'B' stations formed the Australian Federation of Broadcasting Stations, which later exercised considerable influence on government policy and legislation.

The same *Wireless Weekly* article states that stations never commissioned their own advertising (or actively constructed an 'image'); the writer asks whether readers have ever heard a station broadcast the phrase,

A little wireless every night
Will help to keep you fit and bright.

The quality of the service provided apparently precluded the necessity of station advertisement. However, while blatant advertising was absent

from broadcasts, stations were legally required to identify themselves on air, and this was soon transformed into a public relations exercise in order to attract listeners to a particular station. The most successful advertising medium for stations, though, was the wireless periodical. A glance at any contemporary specialist wireless magazine will show the level of inter-station rivalry (among 'A' stations), and the extent to which individual stations advertised themselves. The article then makes a significant shift in direction:

Is wireless any good as a medium? ... The secret of successful advertising is perpetual repetition, and that, not merely to the ear, but to the eye. When wireless vision comes, as come it must, then, I grant you, let us tighten up our advertising schedule.²²⁸

This questioning of the relevance of broadcast advertising echoes earlier arguments in *Wireless Weekly*, strongly criticising direct advertising by stations.²²⁹ Counihan suggests that "discreet sponsorship of programmes by advertisers may have been acceptable, but direct advertising would be rejected, and would turn many listeners away."²³⁰ Questions were being raised about the propriety of carrying advertisements into the home, which was seen as a 'sanctified' place. The *Telegraph* alerted its readers to the American system of radio advertising in 1929:

In America the public does not pay any listening fee, and consequently the owner of the station has to finance himself by obtaining revenue from advertisers. A firm desirous of informing listeners of its products hires a certain amount of 'broadcasting time' from the station and arranges for the artists.²³¹

However, Australian listeners were not accustomed to such a system, nor to the notion of programmes sponsored by advertisers. While

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ See, for example, *WW*, 9 May and 25 July 1924.

²³⁰ Counihan 1982: 196.

²³¹ *Telegraph*, 6 Mar. 1929, p. 10.

sponsorship may have proved worthwhile, direct advertising in designated blocks of time provided a good source of revenue for the station (see Table 1.1), and was attractive to advertisers.

According to R.R. Walker, advertising on 'A' stations ceased in 1927, with the exception of 4QG.²³² The station continued to advertise in five-minute blocks until taken over by the Australian Broadcasting Company in 1930. In a report tabled in early 1929 Robinson noted that the Company had signalled its desire to dispense with advertising on 'A' stations (although this had not yet fully taken place). He agreed with the decision, suggesting that "in the past 4.Q.G. has accepted advertising merely owing to the fact that its existence in a sparsely populated state was somewhat precarious from a financial point of view."²³³ Robinson did, however, think it foolish to dispense with all broadcast advertising in Queensland. His station was at the time receiving over £1000 per annum in negotiated advertising contracts, and about the same amount in casual advertising.²³⁴ He advocated the establishment of a 'B' class station by the Company, to which all 4QG's advertising would be transferred when it became part of the Company's network. This is discussed further in chapter four. Advertising provided a significant source of revenue for the station, and was viewed as a valuable part of its operations. Unfortunately for Robinson, his suggestion was not acted upon.

One final point may be made regarding the place of advertising in the Australian Broadcasting Commission, which commenced in 1932.

²³²Walker 1973: 21.

²³³'General,' undated report, p. 4, QSA 82/7.

²³⁴*Ibid.*

Ken Inglis points out that legislation creating the Commission was prepared for the Labor Government in 1931 and taken over by the United Australia Party Government of Joseph Lyons in December that year.

Inglis comments:

In both versions ... the Bill allowed the ABC to get money from advertisements ... By the time the Bill became an Act, the ABC could not take advertisements. The change was pressed on the Government not by people who thought advertising improper on the national system, or who feared its independence, but by owners of newspapers and commercial radio stations who didn't want the ABC competing with them. If the Scullin Government had survived that election, it might have resisted such pressure, and the ABC would have taken advertisements.²³⁵

Thus an ABC free of advertisements, as it is today, was not an attempt to provide a superior service or to be free from commercial restraints, but ironically a direct result of the power of commercial media companies.²³⁶

However, from 1925 to 1930 the QRS maintained a policy of including direct advertising in its programmes. Similar charges as those mentioned above applied throughout the period. From a perusal of the station's advertising logs, the number and make-up of advertisements also remained much the same.

²³⁵Inglis 1981.

²³⁶For a discussion of how trade interests were able to alter the 1932 ABC Bill see Roberts 1972: 149-154.

Chapter Four

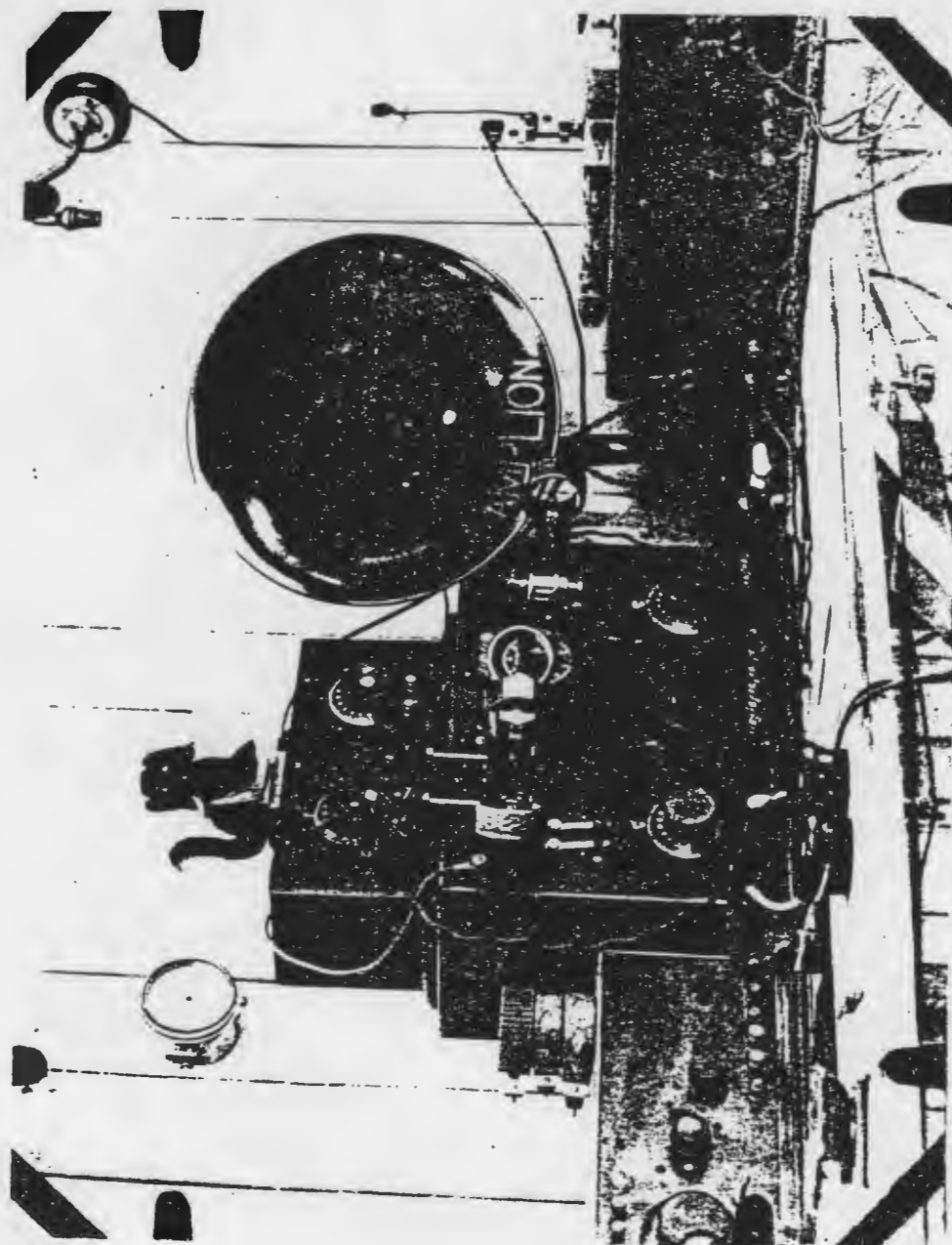
The Queensland Radio Service and Listeners

The Community Radio Scheme

Radio broadcasting in the 1920s followed a similar pattern wherever it was established in the world. The pattern consisted of transmissions from a central point to individual 'listeners-in;' it was only by mid-decade that direct appeals were made to particular groups of listeners such as families in their homes. As Raymond Williams suggests, it was not inevitable that this new means of social communication would be harnessed in the way it was.²³⁷ The technology itself did not guarantee its development along the path mapped out for it (in Australia) by the PMG's Department, one which presupposed that broadcasts would invade the private sphere of the home. In Queensland the State Government engineered a Community Radio Scheme so that rural dwellers could receive broadcasts from 4QG. While programmes were transmitted from one point, the Government directed communities to gather in a public place to receive them. It was this that made the initial Queensland experience unusual.

In February 1925 State Cabinet approved a proposal suggested by Robinson to supply wireless sets to country areas. Its purpose was to encourage rural people to 'listen-in' to 4QG's broadcasts and for the station to increase its number of listeners. The State Departments of Education and Agriculture played a major role in promoting the Community Radio Scheme, perceiving the benefits of mass distribution

²³⁷Williams 1974: 24.



Collection: John Wiley Library, Brisbane

Amateur wireless apparatus at Goondiwindi, 1922

of information and educational matter to the public. Individuals operated amateur wireless sets in Queensland, but these were concentrated almost exclusively in Brisbane and the south-east corner of the state. The problem identified by Robinson and Macgregor (Director of the Council of Agriculture) was that the majority of farmers would not purchase receiving sets due to their prohibitive cost. This cost was brought about by the necessity for a greater receiving capacity for the weaker signals travelling to regional areas. Farmers, already careful in spending money on luxuries, were wary of buying receiving sets, and this tended to disadvantage them.

Macgregor explained the situation to a wireless company representative (probably of AWA):

There is a very large proportion of our farming community which unfortunately will not be able to afford a receiving set in the home. I therefore have in view plans for the installation of community receiving sets.²³⁸

There were about 700 LPAs in the State, and Macgregor planned to link them up to receive 4QG transmissions.²³⁹ He realised that some would be outside the station's range, but thought that most would be in a position to benefit from the service.

The scheme was planned on an extensive scale. Local communities were encouraged to organise entertainment and fund-raising activities to finance the scheme, and to purchase receiving sets. LPAs would own the sets and install them in local schools, and teachers

²³⁸Letter, 19 Sep. 1925, QSA 80/6

²³⁹*Ibid.*

would be trained as operators.²⁴⁰ The general community could 'listen-in' at night to programmes, and it was envisaged that children could listen to special educational broadcasts at certain times during the day. Participating schools would be a communal "gathering place"²⁴¹ for adults as well as children. 4QG broadcast market reports around midday, though, when farmers were working. To solve this dilemma Macgregor suggested that students be supplied with special printed forms, and as part of their lessons, record the main news items and the market reports, delivering them to their parents in the afternoon²⁴² (Macgregor seemed not to associate broadcasting closely with children's entertainment; he suggested that "by arrangement between the school teacher and the parents the children could on a certain evening per week be permitted to listen in to the *Bedtime Stories*."²⁴³). This was a novel idea, one not repeated elsewhere in Australia. The Brisbane station and listeners in the country were connected by technical middlepersons (teachers and children), who acted rather like telegraph operators.

Connected with the Community Radio Scheme was a State Radio Shop which was to handle the distribution of wireless sets. In 1924 the *Telegraph* stated that "it may be taken for granted that the manufacture of suitable sets at the lowest cost possible will be one of the questions which Cabinet will consider."²⁴⁴ While manufacturing sets was not a viable option, the Government granted the QRS a guaranteed overdraft of £2000 to enable a retail shop to be set up. Radio dealers offered several types of set to the Government. Robinson arranged tests at Maryborough and

²⁴⁰An interstate conference of the Federation of Australian Teachers in 1925 expressed the hope that "schools which have installed receiving sets will be given some form of subsidy from the Federal Government," *WW*, 16 Oct. 1925, p. 48. This did not eventuate.

²⁴¹Community Radio Scheme,' report, Feb. 1925, p. 1, QSA 84/21.

²⁴²Letter, 19 Sep. 1925, QSA 84/21.

²⁴³Community Radio Scheme,' report, *op. cit.*

²⁴⁴*Telegraph*, 31 Dec. 1924, p. 3.

Toowoomba to determine their effectiveness. However, before the shop could commence trading, plans for it were considerably revised. Robinson was eventually forced to recommend the opening of "a small bureau on a limited basis" for the sale of sets and accessories (such as headphones and batteries).²⁴⁵ There was never any suggestion of subsidising rural listeners or providing sets at cost price. Sets were to be sold "on terms similar to those quoted by ordinary traders,"²⁴⁶ but all profits were to be used to develop broadcasting. The proposed Community Radio Scheme, although innovative, was gradually scaled down. It became an interim measure to maximise the number of listeners outside the Brisbane metropolitan area. The QRS's unofficial first annual report does not mention the scheme,²⁴⁷ and later silence on the subject suggests that it became economically unviable.

The QRS saw the farmer as perhaps its most important listener. While other stations in the mid-1920s found it advantageous to capture an urban population for advertising purposes, 4QG was primarily a public utility serving its owners, Queensland taxpayers. Rural listeners, who comprised prominent pastoralists rather than small-time farmers, were well catered for by 4QG programmes. They were often pleased to hear anything resembling the 'high' culture of the city. Robinson noted that of all listener mail, letters "coming from a distance are always couched in the most cordial and flattering terms."²⁴⁸ He also suggested that throughout Australia the majority of listeners preferred distant stations (that is, interstate 'A' class stations).²⁴⁹ City listeners were accustomed to

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, summary page.

²⁴⁷ 30 June 1926, QSA PRE/A884.

²⁴⁸ *WW*, 10 Sep. 1926, p. 7.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

a variety of entertainment, from opera to vaudeville and cinema, and were more prone than country listeners to criticise stations for perceived failures and weaknesses. However, Robinson's suggestion shows that the 'wonder of wireless' was still powerful in 1926, and that listeners enjoyed eavesdropping on remote stations. This may have been a continuation of the desire to experience the novelty of new technology.

Wireless Weekly noted in December 1926 that although the value of radio to the farmer was obvious, no accurate information was available on the actual cash saving made through investing in a wireless set.²⁵⁰ Farmers were encouraged to purchase a set as an investment (or to listen frequently to a friend's set). They were told they would profit from such investments by obtaining advance market prices and weather details.

Relay stations

When the PMG allocated a broadcasting license to the Queensland State Government, it did so with a number of conditions. One of these was that the proposed station must begin broadcasting within six months of being granted a license, and this was achieved by constructing a temporary station. Another condition was that the station seriously consider establishing relay stations in regional areas to facilitate better reception for country people who used cheap crystal receiving sets. Barry Cole adds that "[c]ity stations which agreed to establish relay stations in country areas were acknowledged to be doing the Post Office and the public 'a favour' which would not be forgotten."²⁵¹ Soon after 4QG began

²⁵⁰ *WW*, 3 Dec. 1926, p. 43.

²⁵¹ Cole 1966: 73.

broadcasting from its temporary facilities in 1925, the QRS applied for and received a 'B' class license for a station to be erected in Rockhampton. It seems that relay stations were synonymous with 'B' stations in the mid-1920s.²⁵² Robinson's plan was to develop a central broadcasting station in Brisbane under an 'A' license. This would receive all licence fee revenue for the state. When the central station was established, the QRS could set up relay stations under 'B' licences in key regional centres, notably Rockhampton and Toowoomba. The 'B' stations would be financed indirectly through 'A' station revenue.

The original plan, ambitious and utilitarian as it was, could not be implemented. Robinson advised the PMG's Department in May 1926 that due to the State Government's current financial position, capital necessary for the expansion could not be guaranteed. He requested that the 'B' license for Rockhampton be cancelled. Edward Gold had opened 4GR (Gold Radio) in Towoomba in August 1925 as a 'B' station, and this remained the only 'B' station in Queensland until August 1930.²⁵³ Robinson had pressed for a total State monopoly of 'A' station broadcasting, and perhaps his acquisition of the 'B' license was designed to prevent more private 'B' stations from opening. If so, cancellation of the Rockhampton license would have been a hard blow to Robinson and a serious setback for the long term policy of the QRS.

To operate a relay station, telephone trunk lines had to connect the main station with the smaller station; hence the term 'relay.' Apparently no telephone lines connected Brisbane with Rochampton in 1926. The QRS would have had to pay the PMG's Department for the construction

²⁵²Letter from Robinson to Chief Manager, Wireless and Telegraphs, PMG's Department, 15 May 1926. Robinson mentions the two terms interchangeably.

²⁵³Walker 1973: 171.

of a new line, as well as an annual rental fee of about £4000. Construction and rental fees were far beyond the station's annual revenue and thus were unfeasible. However, trunk lines were already in place between Brisbane and Toowoomba. Robinson made inquiries into setting up a relay station in Toowoomba. He found that the PMG's Department could provide an exclusive line to the QRS for £710 per annum, or could rent one to the station at an hourly rate of seven shillings by day and 5/3 by night.

This information led Robinson to apply to the State Government for permission to open a relay station in Toowoomba at an estimated cost of £2000. He explained that although close to Brisbane, the city was in a bad fading area for 4QG's signal. Probably he wanted to compete with Gold's 4GR and force it out of business. He assured the State Government that provision of a relay station in Toowoomba would result in an additional 2000 listeners' licences being taken out in the immediate area during the first twelve months of operation. As a result, the QRS would make a profit from the enterprise despite the initial £2000 expenditure. However, the Government was again unwilling to make available the necessary capital, and the proposal was rejected.

Robinson continued to press for a second station under the control of the QRS, albeit without success. When it became clear that 4QG would be taken over by the Australian Broadcasting Company, he proposed that the QRS (or its equivalent in the Company's structure) set up a 'B' class station in Brisbane. It was to be expressly for the benefit of listeners, but would enhance the service provided by the existing station. The QRS had found it impossible to cater for the tastes of all listeners all the time through one station. This was especially so in the north of the state,

where "radio ... [had] not progressed as rapidly and as fully" as listeners may have preferred.²⁵⁴ According to Robinson, the seeming lack of development in the north was due to the fact that listeners had no alternative programmes available to them. They often used low-powered sets which could not pick up stations in NSW, Victoria and other places. Listeners were also becoming increasingly loyal to local stations, and stations themselves created a sense of community within the region or state in which they broadcast.

The proposed 'B' station would have been managed from 4QG, receiving feeds of 4QG programmes via landline. Robinson suggested that the new station should commence simultaneously with the transfer of programming to the Company. This was to be publicised as the ushering in of a new era in Queensland broadcasting and the provision of a dual service for Brisbane listeners. Admittedly, the establishment of a 'B' station in Toowoomba was of no benefit to listeners in the state's north. However, Robinson's proposal, like most of those preceding it, failed to eventuate. Only one station in Queensland commenced broadcasting under the umbrella of the Australian Broadcasting Company in 1930.

Listening apparatus

In the early 1920s, before the advent of broadcasting, wireless enthusiasts occupied their time in constructing receiving apparatus from individual parts available at hobby or electrical stores. They listened to

²⁵⁴General, report, p. 1, QSA 82/7.

amateur transmissions and launched their own transmissions into the 'ether' for other amateurs to receive. By the end of the decade a fundamental change had occurred. Receiving apparatus were mass produced, available as complete sets, and relatively cheap when compared with what amateurs paid for their parts.

In February 1924 Macgregor (Director of the Council of Agriculture) wrote to Gillies suggesting that farmers could buy "listening in sets" for between £10 and £50. The sets referred to were valve sets. This was equivalent to the cost of "quite an ordinary gramophone."²⁵⁵ By 1926, crystal sets could be bought in Brisbane for a couple of pounds, and valve sets for between £9 and £70, depending upon the number of valves and the quality of the exterior.²⁵⁶ For example, a one-valve Aenola set could be bought for £9; a two-valve for £14; a three-valve for £20; a four-valve for £25; and a five-valve for £32.²⁵⁷ Headphones could be purchased for about 30 shillings. The retail price of an AWA six-valve set fell from £90 in 1926 to £35 in 1928.²⁵⁸ Similar price falls occurred with other sets between 1926 and 1930 as a result of improvements in manufacturers' production methods. The following items are listed to facilitate comparisons with other goods and services available in Brisbane during the period. In 1925 a men's suit cost 97/6; a His Master's Voice gramophone cost £3.10.0; a three-piece lounge suite cost £11.15.0; an Essex Six motor car cost £340; and a house in Ashgrove cost £375.²⁵⁹ In 1930, a men's suit cost £3.19.0; a three-piece lounge suite cost £23; a Morris Oxford Six motor car cost £213; a house in Eagle Junction cost £315; and a

²⁵⁵Letter, 26 Feb. 1924, p. 1, QSA 82/1.

²⁵⁶Robinson & Williams 1926: 153. For example, a one-valve Aenola receiving set could be bought for £9; a two-valve for £14; a three-valve for £20; a four-valve for £25; and a five-valve for £32.

²⁵⁷Robinson & Williams 1926: 153.

²⁵⁸Forster 1964: 109.

²⁵⁹These items appear in the *Brisbane Courier*, 1, 2 and 15 July 1925.

Brandes

The name to know in Radio

IT is the Hall Mark of High Quality and Scientific Workmanship. Brandes has made possible the superlative achievements of the Radio World. Brandes means an entirely new conception of the Musical possibilities of Radio.

Brandes



Radio Headsets

Captures the faintest signal within range of your apparatus with un-failing resistency, and gives it volume and clarity.

ASK YOUR DEALER

If he cannot supply write direct to the wholesalers

**Home Radio Service
Limited.**

Courier Building, Queen Street
B R I S B A N E



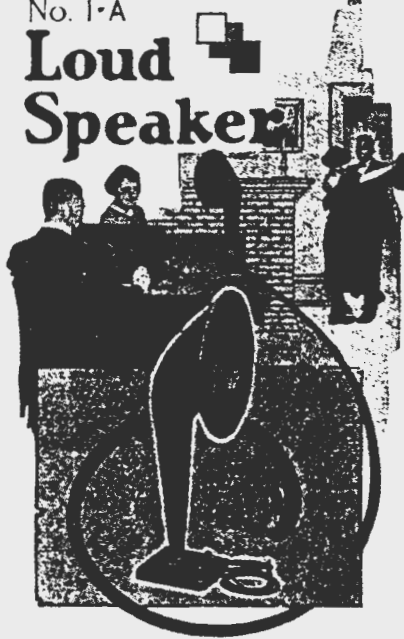
BRANDES TABLE TALKER

Will give you new notes never before heard through a Radio Speaker. Each note has a volume of purest tone, resonant and real, **63/~**

Robinson & Williams 1926

Stromberg-Carlson
No. 1-A

**Loud
Speaker**



For
Better
Radio
Reception

**Stromberg-
Carlson**

Loud
Speakers
and
Headsets

The Stromberg-Carlson Loud Speaker will give the abundance of sound volume necessary to fill the largest room of your home.

It reproduces not only speech but music with true tonal characteristics.

Yet it is simple and economical to operate.

Stromberg-Carlson Headsets and loud speakers are made by the company renowned for its telephones.

Ask your nearest Dealer for
STROMBERG - CARLSON

Or Write Direct to the Wholesalers

Home Radio Service Ltd.

COURIER BUILDING

Queen Street BRISBANE

HOPPER BROTHERS

Motor Cycle Exchange and Service Station

WHARF ST. - - BRISBANE

TELEPHONE CENT 6759

AGENTS for INDIAN, A.J.S. and RUDGE Motor Cycles, also SOLE QUEENSLAND AGENTS for "BROUGH SUPERIOR" (the ROLLS ROYCE of Motor Cycles).

We have all makes of used machines in stock at lowest prices.

REPAIRS and TUNING a SPECIALITY.

OUR WIRELESS DEPARTMENT

Our Wireless Sets are not Factory built. Every Set is built by ourselves to suit the conditions required, as no two places are alike, and we guarantee results.

**LONG RANGE - GREAT SELECTIVITY
PURE TONE—— EASE OF CONTROL**

Are the four big features of our Sets—and when you take into consideration the moderate prices, the proposition become an unusually attractive one.

WRITE FOR PARTICULARS.

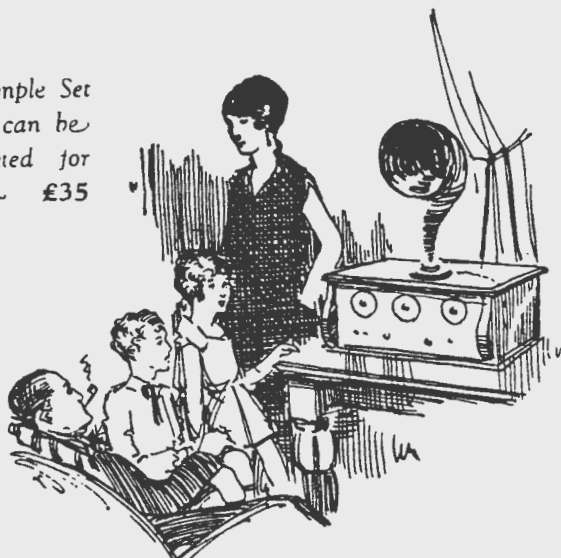
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WHARF STREET———BRISBANE

THE~ RICO-DYNE

The World's Wonder
5 VALVE SET £25

A Simple Set
that can be
completed for
about £35



Experience and quality has achieved the seemingly impossible—a non-oscillating and highly selective set which obtains marvellous long distance reception, with clear tone and excellent volume. This permanent world's wonder set has no counterpart near the price.

Ask Your Dealer for RICO-DYNE

If he cannot Supply, write to

Home Radio Service Limited

Courier Building — Queen Street — BRISBANE

three-week tourist cruise to New Guinea cost £60.²⁶⁰ Judging from these figures a powerful valve set was a luxury beyond the financial means of many consumers. Crystal or small valve sets were all that some could purchase, and possession of one often meant denying one's self other luxuries or buying on hire purchase.

Country people, especially farmers, were targetted by manufacturers and retailers as important buyers of sets. The transformation in wireless retailing from amateur hobby shops to "a major sector of industrial production" heralded the introduction of consumer durables to Australia.²⁶¹ In 1925 the *Telegraph* stated that "[t]oday there are two or three thousand more listeners in Brisbane than there were three or four months ago, and trade in wireless sets and components is booming."²⁶² The wireless manufacturing industry was so prosperous that the *ABC Yearbook 1930* suggested that "the Radio Trade here in Australia has now become a very solidly established industry."²⁶³

When 4QG commenced broadcasting in 1925 it created a new market for receiving sets in Queensland. Four months before the temporary station opened, Robinson had had "several inquiries for receivers and [had] accepted one definite order for a very large set."²⁶⁴ Such orders placed undue stress on the QRS, and Robinson suggested that the State Government set up a radio bureau in the city to handle them.²⁶⁵ The bureau was to act as selling agent, information source and technical

²⁶⁰These items appear in the *Brisbane Courier*, 3 and 8 July 1930.

²⁶¹Williams 1974:26.

²⁶²*Telegraph*, 16 Sep. 1925.

²⁶³Page 71.

²⁶⁴'Merchandising of radio sets and apparatus,' report, p. 1, QSA 84/22.

²⁶⁵*Ibid.*

support facility for listeners. Although theoretically a fine proposal, the Government did not approve it. Robinson realised that without careful planning, the establishment of a Government-owned bureau may have led to "another losing State Enterprise," but perhaps Gillies, the Premier, sensed that this was inevitable. Wireless set retailing remained the province of private electrical goods retailers and chemists.

Listeners in 1925 considered receiving sets to be examples of scientific advancement, but by 1930, sets had been transformed into essential articles of household furniture. As early as 1926 Sydney's *Daily Telegraph* noted that

[r]adio has made very good progress during the last few years and even in Australia has advanced to the stage where there are quite distinct fashions in radio equipment. Doubtless, this tendency has been created by the ever-present influence of women - bless their hearts - but it is there nevertheless."²⁶⁶

In 1927, Brisbane's Radio Inspector, Tom Armstrong, expressed confidence that the radio industry would expand indefinitely. Liking it to the motor industry, he said that "refinement follows refinement so rapidly that the receiver model of some months previously soon becomes practically obsolescent."²⁶⁷ However, while a boom occurred in 1925 and 1926, trade began to ease in 1927. In October 1929 the *Telegraph* noted that "[i]n the last two or three years some [radio traders] have closed their doors, and the radio traders who are still in existence are looking to a new era of broadcasting ... to save them from going out of business."²⁶⁸ The new era referred to was the impending takeover of 4QG by the Australian Broadcasting Company. The reason for the downturn in the sale of sets

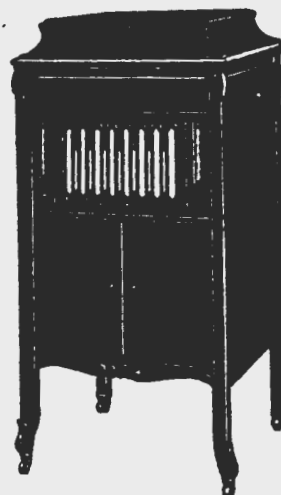
²⁶⁶*Daily Telegraph*, 30 Apr. 1926.

²⁶⁷*QRN*, 1 Feb. 1927, p. 18.

²⁶⁸*Telegraph*, 2 Oct. 1929, p. 12.

A VOCALION Triumph

By Wireless



Remarkable Results Achieved by 4QG, Brisbane

in a series of Wireless Concerts through the
medium of

The New Aeolian Vocalion

THE WORLD'S GREATEST PHONO-
GRAPH AND "AEOLIAN" RECORDS.

A "Vocalion" has been specially selected on account of its Trueness of Tone and Distinctness of Reproduction.

The secret of "Vocalion" tone is scientific construction.

Hear the "Vocalion" Record by Wireless and make your selection. We will forward any number on approval.

SEND FOR CATALOGUES.

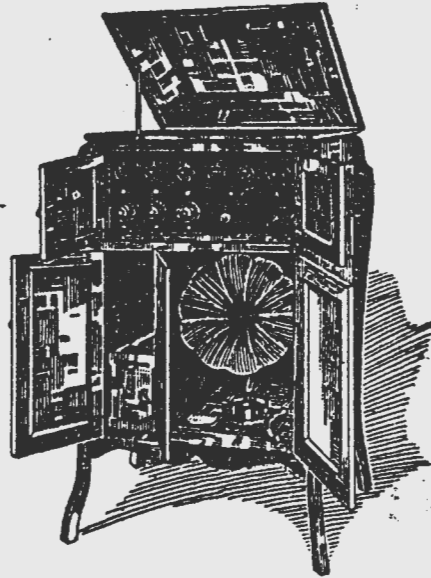
The Aeolian Company

(Formerly the Pianola Co.).

"HEAR, HERE."

436-8 Queen Street (Opp. Customs House),
Brisbane.

Robinson & Williams 1926: 155



THE GLORIOLA

The Super Radio Set—*Handsomely Finished*

The "Gloriola" Radio Set is simple to operate, and is easily controlled; it requires no technical knowledge on the part of the owner. It receives all Australian stations, and frequently overseas stations powerfully and with perfect clarity. The "Gloriola"

Set is mechanically efficient and is fitted with the latest scientific developments in the sphere of Wireless Telephony.

As an article of Furniture the "Gloriola" Cabinet is handsomely finished, and is worthy of a prominent place in the home.

Call or write us for further particulars, or ask us to show you the fine points of this instrument.

J. B. Chandler & Co.

45 ADELAIDE STREET, BRISBANE

"For Radio Service"

B. A. S.

Don't Pay Fancy Prices For **A GOOD RADIO SET**

Don't pay profiteer's prices for your receiver. Buy an "AENOLA" direct from the manufacturer, who guarantees absolute satisfaction or money back. Our 4-Valve Sets have received Durban and San Francisco, and other distant stations with ease—at times strong enough to work a loud speaker. Best Components, Fine Cabinet Work and Sound Construction.

AENOLA RADIO SETS

Look at These Prices

One valve £9 Three valve £20
Two valve £14 Four valve £25
Five valve £32

These prices include dull emitter valves, batteries, headphones, cabinet, aerial equipment, and coils.

DEMONSTRATIONS ARRANGED.

The Cheapest in Brisbane by far!

A. E. NEWNAM

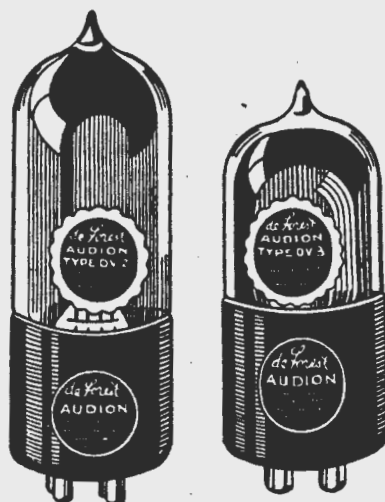
Logan Road, Fiveways, Woolloongabba
SOUTH BRISBANE

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TONE—

and Lots of Volume, too



The Improved
DV2 for Volume,
Tone, and the DX
Merchant. 5 Volts,
.25 Amps.

DV3 uses but 1
Current as used
by Other. 3 Volts,
.06 Amps.

DE FOREST

Quality Valves

The only Valves with Bases of the Supreme
Insulation ISOLANITE.

International Radio Co. Ltd.

200 Castlereagh Street,
SYDNEY.

91-93 Courtenay Place,
WELLINGTON, N.Z.

was allegedly due to the station's poor programme quality, although that was opinion, not fact.

Wireless sets required an electricity supply to operate, but in Queensland mains electricity supply was available to few residences. Early sets relied on batteries for their operation. The practice of using mains supply did not become common until 1928. Using batteries presented problems, though, because listeners did not always understand the principle on which they worked. The *Queensland Radio News* once warned that listeners whose sets produced increasingly weaker signals should not remove the "tubes" (valves?) but should replace or "reactivate" their batteries.²⁶⁹ Batteries could be purchased at bicycle shops, motor garages and specialist wireless shops. The *Telegraph* reported in January 1929 that one of the most important advances in radio receiver design during the previous year was "the further exploitation of the domestic electric power supply for the operation of sets instead of the old battery method."²⁷⁰ Apparently listeners were at first sceptical of the innovation, but when convinced of the benefits of having no batteries, "conversion commenced in real earnest."²⁷¹ Listeners usually had their existing sets modified to receive mains power rather than purchasing a new set.

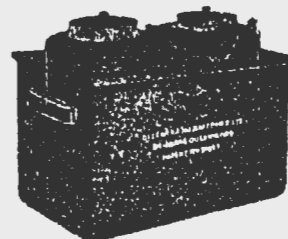
From a perusal of advertisements for wireless sets it seems that Queensland listeners most often positioned their sets in the family's living room. Sets were placed in a conspicuous position such as the top of the mantle-piece or dresser. They were usually not as bulky as sets

²⁶⁹ *QRN*, 1 Sep. 1927, p. 10.

²⁷⁰ *Telegraph*, 2 Jan. 1929, p. 7.

²⁷¹ *ABC Yearbook 1930*, p. 70, ABCDA.

*The Battery
YOU
Have Been
Waiting for!—*



THE WONDERFUL
Radio-BLEECK-Battery

Fully charged in one minute by adding water to powders and solutions supplied. No other electrical apparatus required. Voltage of 2 Cells in series of 5.5, Capacity approx. 50 Ampere hours.

Don't worry any more about Accumulators but make your own Electricity! ANY WHERE! NO WAITING—NO DELAY

The Bleeck Radio "A" Battery is revolutionising wireless reception everywhere, especially in the country districts, where it is not only inconvenient but practically impossible to have accumulators charged, except at a prohibitive price.

THE

RADIO-BLEECK-BATTERY

is the simplest, cheapest, and most powerful Primary Battery in the world, and is fully protected in every country.

Write for Booklet and Full Particulars to—

BLEECK RADIO BATTERIES Ltd.

BLEECK HOUSE, BURNETT LANE, BRISBANE

W. A. BLEECK (Inventor, Managing Director)

Robinson & Williams 1926: before p. 1.

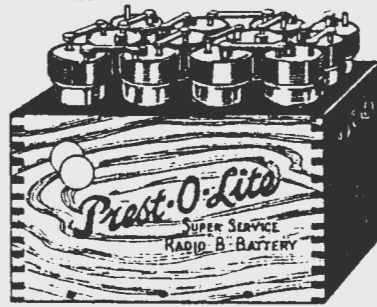
Strong, Silent POWER

Twenty years ago when the motor-car industry was in its infancy, PREST-O-LITE gave the automobile its first dependable headlights.

To-day, PREST-O-LITE Radio Batteries are giving wireless enthusiasts the world over, wonderful service and satisfaction.

Prest-o-Lite Batteries are the Rolls-Royces of the Battery Field. They outlive other makes by years, and give a steady and constant discharge under all conditions.

Write for full information and prices.



Prest-O-Lite 'A' and 'B' Batteries

Will Hold Their Charge Over Longer Periods

QUEENSLAND MOTORS LIMITED

Sole Agents
WICKHAM ST., MALL

BRISBANE

Sole Agents
ADELAIDE STREET

QRN

You'll spend less for batteries— You'll have better reception—

When you buy Willard's you buy Batteries that last for years. Your investment in Battery economy is an investment in better reception, too, for these

Batteries are rechargeable. No need to tell the difference this makes in the quality of reception.

Obtainable from all Licensed Dealers

Queensland
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Motor Supplies Ltd.

Where Adelaide and Boundary
Streets meet—Brisbane.

Willard

RADIO BATTERIES

QRN



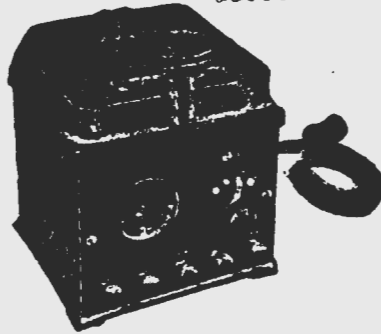
Bring your Battery Troubles
to Us—

Or Let Us Call for Them
**WE COLLECT AND
DELIVER BATTERIES**

Phone J2350

EXIDE SERVICE STATION
525 Stanley Street, South Brisbane

BB, April 1926



The Wonderful New Type
"VALLEY"
 HOME
CHARGER

It's most aggravating to KNOW those distant stations are dancing along your aerial, but your batteries are too weak to draw the music down into your set. Keep your batteries fully charged. Do it at home and save money and inconvenience.

The "Valley" Home Charger is the most modern and efficient of all. Any size or make of battery can be charged without the necessity of connecting the cells in parallel. Simple to operate, dust proof, practically noiseless, having heavy glass cover. Price, £9/10/-, complete.

Low Tension Voltage (for "A" Batteries), 2, 6, and 12 volts.
 High Tension Voltages (for "B" Batteries), 24, 48, 72, 96 volts.

THE THOMAS RADIO Coy.

Adelaide St. (Entrance 'Wart' Cafe) Brisbane

Robinson & Williams 1926: 151

Radiola
Four



SET—ONLY PRICE £19

THE BUILDERS OF BIG 4QG and other transmitting stations in Australia and elsewhere are at the back of this set. Their Expert Designers and Skilled Workmen are your Guarantee of Satisfaction. Encased in a handsome univision grande cabinet, with folding doors, it is an ornament in the home. Its mellow tone, wonderful selectivity, and long range makes it a joy to "Listen-in." SEE IT! HEAR IT! and you will recognize what can be accomplished when EXPERTS ARE ON THE JOB.

No other station-New & mind how powerful or near-will interfere
 THIS IS NO EMPTY BOAST. COME AND HEAR IT YOURSELF !!!

Choose your own accessories—we offer two suggestions:—
 Instrument only 14 0 0
 Five Coils, four (U.V. 201A or A.W.A. 100 Valves, Bias Battery, 48 volts 5 10 0
 Set with Coils, Valves, and Bias Battery 19 10 0
 Fitted with highest quality equipment, including two Ever Ready 60 volt batteries, one Amphon Dragon Loud Speaker, two Brander matched tone quad tone phones 15 10 0
 Set complete as above 44 0 0
 Fitted with good standard accessories, including large dry cells, Amphon Junior Speaker, Murdoch Phones 42 0 0

W. HAIGH & CO. LTD.
 IPSWICH

Phone Ipswich 223
 (Three Lines)

(P. 4) 'Bus
 53

QRN

Advertisements for Radiola wireless set and home battery charger, 1926

designed in the 1930s; indeed, crystal sets were often very small, less than 12 inches long. Fathers or husbands controlled the sets, determining which stations would be received and adjusting the volume control knob. Some of the advertisement illustrations accompanying this chapter give an indication of how listening environments were conceived in the 1920s.

Attracting listeners and licences

Large numbers of listeners did not spontaneously appear when 4QG began broadcasting in 1925. As Counihan explains, "the early 'radio interests' - the makers and sellers of sets, policy makers and regulators, the broadcasters themselves - were acutely aware that they had both to attract a public, and to secure its allegiance."²⁷² The shift from individual listeners with headphones, to family groups of listeners, and finally to the constitution of a mass 'audience' took a long time to complete. The following tables show the rise in listeners' licences for Queensland and Australia from 1925 to 1933:

²⁷²Counihan 1982: 196.

TABLE 4.1: Listeners' licences in Queensland, 1925 - 1932.²⁷³

Year ended 30 June	Licences in force	Ratio per 100 population	Increase in number	Increase as percentage
1925	1267	0.15	--	--
1926	8450	0.98	7183	567
1927	23,249	2.63	14,799	175
1928	25,287	2.82	2083	9
1929	24,774	2.7	-543	-2
1930	23,335	2.51	-1409	-5
1931	24,216	2.55	881	3
1932	29,060	3.02	4844	20

TABLE 4.2: Listeners' licences in Australia, 1925 - 1932.²⁷⁴

Year ended 30 June	Licences in force	Ratio per 100 population	Increase in number	Increase as percentage
1925	63,874	1.08	--	--
1926	128,060	2.14	64,186	100
1927	225,249	3.68	97,189	76
1928	270,507	4.33	45,258	20
1929	301,199	4.75	30,692	11
1930	312,192	4.88	10,993	3
1931	331,969	5.12	19,777	6
1932	369,945	5.67	37,976	11

To attract listeners to the station, Robinson skillfully used the local press and wireless periodicals. The *Queensland Radio News* was especially helpful in promoting 4QG to its readers. Robinson also

²⁷³ Australian Broadcasting Commission *Annual Report*, 1932-33, p. 6.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

"the night shall be filled with music"

LONGFELLOW

LONGFELLOW'S prophecy is fulfilled when you own a "Fisk" RADIOLA.

Evenings are spent in the welcome companionship of entertainers, lecturers, and events of worldwide interest—they bring you cheerfulness, humour, gaiety and laughter, to which you eagerly look forward.

And it's all so real—artists literally greet you face to face, just as though a great magician had touched "Fisk" RADIOLA. Reproduction with a natural, intimate, living quality.

There is a "Fisk" RADIOLA for every reception requirement, and no matter which model you choose, it reproduces all radio programmes with artistic fidelity.



The range includes all electric and battery-operated models, housed in either Table or Console Cabinets. In addition, there are two A.W.A. Duoettes for the reception of broadcast programmes and reproduction of phonograph records.



"FISK" RADIOLA

Prices from £32/15/- Easy Extended Terms Arranged
Write to-day for a FREE copy of the new coloured RADIOLA Brochure illustrating all the new models.

An efficient organisation provides for RADIOLA demonstrations in your own home. Please call, or write to any Radio Store, Authorised Radio Dealers in country centres or the Queensland Distribution.

Queensland Distributors—

J. B. CHANDLER & CO., Adelaide St., Brisbane
(Opposite City Hall)

Brisbane Courier, 11 July 1930, p. 6.

Majestic
 MIGHTY MONARCH OF THE AIR
 ELECTRIC RADIO



Throughout the world there's nothing better in radio than a Majestic. To hear distant stations on any of the three models—to experience the simplicity of the single dial control—to examine the luxurious cabinetry, is to be convinced that Majestic absolutely stands alone. Don't buy any set at any price without first judging Majestic Radio in the most rigid test you can possibly think of.

PRIVATE DEMONSTRATION
 AT YOUR CONVENIENCE

From £62/10/-
 Easy Terms Arranged.

Catalogue Post Free on Request.

Palings
 86-88 QUEEN ST
 BRISBANE
AND AT TROVINGA • ROCHAMPTON • TERNVILLE

Brisbane Courier, 8 July 1930, p. 2.

Advertisement for Majestic wireless set, 1930

promoted the station to the Government. In a report entitled 'State Wireless' written early in 1925, he emphasised the value of owning a receiving set:

To the dweller in the city [wireless] will bring entertainment and education , but the man in the country districts will doubtlesds feel its benefits more ... To him during the day time there will be flashed with speed of light, up-to-the-minute market reports, latest news items, weather forecasts, talks for his womenfolk and sporting information and all descriptions of utilitarian matter, ... the strains of sweet music provided in the amusement centre of the State. His children each night will be sent off to bed smilingly cintent after hearing a story ... ²⁷⁵

Many listeners seemed ignorant of the process by which licences were obtained. One QRS file contains over 100 letters from listeners who wrote to the station either paying their fee or asking where it should be paid.²⁷⁶ Licences were available at Post Offices throughout Australia, and were secured in the same way as money orders. Each state was divided into three zones. In Queensland, Zone 1 comprised an area within 100 miles radius of Brisbane, and contained a population of 334,000. Zone 2 comprised the area between 100 and 300 miles of Brisbane, with a population of 286,000. Zone 3 comprised the area between 300 and 500 miles of Brisbane, with a population of 1,380,000 (it included Sydney). The map on the following page shows details of the zones.

The PMG's Department issued three classes of listening licence: ordinary, special and temporary. An ordinary licence was given to householders who used a wireless set for their own entertainment and not for monetary gain. A special licence was granted to hotel owners and others where reception of programmes was intended for public entertainment or information. A temporary licence was issued for

²⁷⁵'State Wireless,' report undated, p. 3, QSA 82/4.

²⁷⁶QSA 96/4.

Towns in Zone One:

Queensland: Brisbane, Crows Nest, Gatton, Gympie, Ipswich, Landsborough, Toowoomba, Warwick.

NSW: Ballina, Casino, Lismore, Murwillumbah.

Towns in Zone Two:

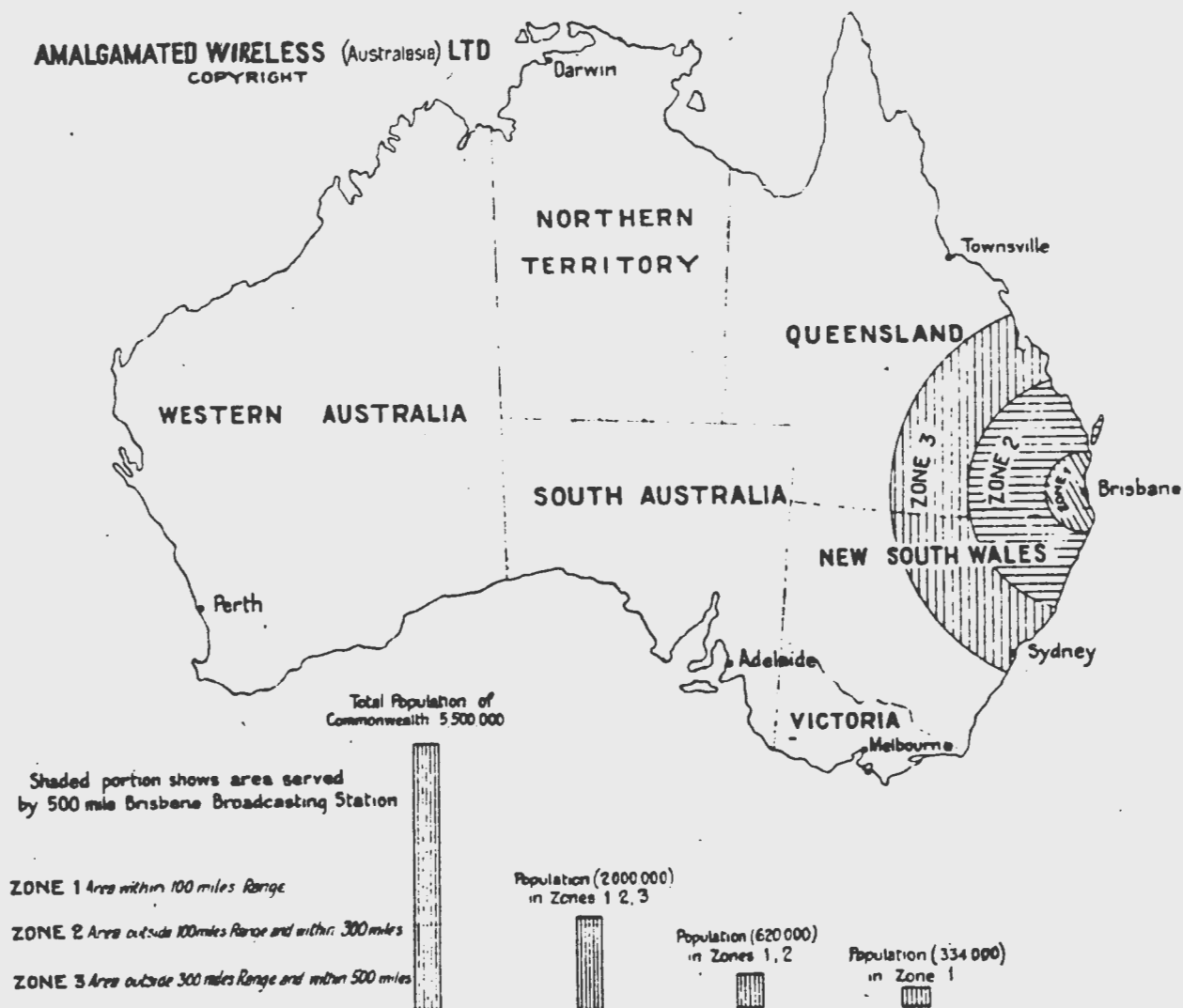
Queensland: Bundaberg, Dalby, Gladstone, Goondiwindi, Maryborough, Miles, Roma, St George, Wallangarra.

NSW: Armidale, Emmaville, Glen Innes, Grafton, Maclean, Moree, Kempsey, Narrabri, Port Macquarie, Tamworth, Ulmarra, Walcha

Towns in Zone Three:

Queensland: Blackall, Charleville, Clermont, Mackay, Mt Morgan, Rockhampton.

NSW: Bourke, Bathurst, Brewarrina, Coonamble, Dubbo, Gunnedah, Lithgow, Maitland, Merriwa, Mudgee, Narromine, Newcastle, Nyngan, Orange, Parramatta, Singleton, Sydney, Warren.



Map showing the three licensing zones for payment of listeners' licence fees

temporary or short term use. A fourth type of licence was as Dealer's Listening Licence. This cost £5 and issued to wireless retailers. All licences were abolished from 1 August 1928 and replaced by a uniform licence costing 24 shillings.²⁷⁷

Licences were renewable annually and fees differed depending on the type of licence being secured and the zone in which the licensee resided. In 1926 fees were as follows:

TABLE 4.3: Licence fees payable for receiving sets in 1926.²⁷⁸

Class of Licence	Fee (Zone 1)	Fee (Zone 2)	Fee (Zone 3)
Ordinary	27/6	25/-	22/6
Special	£10 per annum	£9 per annum	£7/10/- per an.
Temporary	20/- per week	17/6 per week	15/- per week ²⁷⁹

These figures compare favourably with entertainment fees for vaudeville and cinema. For example, in 1925, a vaudeville ticket to Fuller's Empire Theatre in Brisbane cost between 1 and 3 shillings, depending on whether seats were reserved.²⁸⁰ A ticket to the movie *All Quiet on the Western Front* in 1930 cost 1/6, 2/-, 2/5 or 3/6, depending upon where one sat.²⁸¹ Ordinary fees decreased twice during the 1920s, as the Table below shows:

²⁷⁷ABC Yearbook 1930, p. 17, ABCDA

²⁷⁸Robinson & Williams 1926: 112.

²⁷⁹An alternative for this fee was to pay £7.10.0 per annum.

²⁸⁰Brisbane Courier, 17 July 1925, p. 2

²⁸¹Brisbane Courier, 11 July 1930, p. 3 These figures are for the 8.00 pm session.

TABLE 4.4: Fee charges for listeners' licences, 1924 - 1930.²⁸²

Period	Fee ²⁸³	Paid to broadcasting Company	Retained by Department for Admin- istration
17.7.24 to 31.7.25	35/-	30/-	5/-
1.8.25 to 31.12.27	27/-	25/-	2/6
1.1.28 to 1930	24/-	20/-	1/- ²⁸⁴

Between August 1925 and December 1927 fees could be paid in two installments of 15 shillings each.

Unlicensed listeners were a considerable problem to the PMG's Department, and to 'A' stations. The latter relied on licence fee revenue for their operations. Listeners who failed to secure a licence were effectively robbing stations of operating capital, and lowering the standard of service that could be offered. Brisbane's Radio Inspector, Tom Armstrong, related to the *Queensland Radio News* the lengths to which some listeners went to evade paying their licence fee. He explained:

the camouflaged clothes line, fitted with green insulators, is perhaps the most common. [form of evasion]. It is by no means novel for our men to visit a house with the weeks [sic] washing fluttering gaily from the aerial. Another trick is to make use of the telephone lines. Pirate hunting today may not be as dangerous as it was in days gone by, but it is almost as thrilling.²⁸⁵

When McCormack opened the permanent station, he stressed that the duty of all listeners was to obtain licences, "thereby helping the management to provide programmes."²⁸⁶ Many obviously disregarded

²⁸²*ABC Yearbook 1930*, p. 17, ABCDA.

²⁸³These apply only to listeners in Zone 1.

²⁸⁴AWA also received three shillings per licence as patent royalties under the *Wireless Agreement Act of 1927*.

²⁸⁵*QRN*, 1 Feb. 1927, pp. 18, 19.

²⁸⁶*Worker*, 28 April 1926, p.2.

such pleas. The PMG's Department maintained an inspection force to ensure that all listeners possessed licences. In 1927-28, for example, 38 Queenslanders were prosecuted in the police courts for failure to secure a licence, and fines for these individuals totalled £57.19.06.²⁸⁷ The national total for the period was 548 prosecutions and £1057.8.0. in fines.²⁸⁸

In attracting listeners, stations aimed primarily at the local or regional population, although as the pages below show, listeners to 4QG comprised a far greater variety than one might estimate. The *Telegraph* noted in 1927 that most listeners were urban dwellers. It reported that 75 per cent of licensed listeners lived in Queensland's towns and cities, and attributed the lack of listeners in country areas to the failure of wireless retailers to sell and maintain sufficient numbers of sets.²⁸⁹

The *Telegraph* also noted in the same year that an interesting aspect of 4QG's service was in exposing Australian culture and society to the world. The newspaper claimed that international listeners

saw our coastline on the map; they knew, possibly, that we grew wool and that we had some gold mines; but of our national life and our national resources they knew little. But today they feel they know us. They have listened to our music programmes; they have followed the description of national events, such as the opening of Canberra, and they have learned, too, something of our national hopes and aspirations.²⁹⁰

This is an aspect of radio's influence which is seldom discussed, but one which may have had a significant impact on listeners in other countries.

²⁸⁷PMG's Department *18th Annual Report*, 1927-28, p.19.

²⁸⁸*Ibid.*

²⁸⁹*Telegraph*, 2 Feb. 1927, p. 11.

²⁹⁰*Telegraph*, 14 Dec. 1927, p. 14.

Unfortunately for the PMG's Department, overseas listeners were not subject to licence fees.

'Be an epicure, not a glutton' - listener feedback

As related in chapters two and three, 4QG provided a wide variety of programmes for listeners to enjoy. The station provided one of the best services available in Australia, in terms of transmission power and programme quality. However, it was frequently criticised, in letters published by local newspapers, and by word of mouth. Robinson and heads of other stations endeavoured to counteract such criticism. They did this by advising listeners to choose only those programmes they found enjoyable. Unrestrained criticism was seen to emanate from listeners who, fearing they may miss something, became addicts and listened to everything broadcast by a station. The *ABC Yearbook 1930* implored the listeners to "be an epicure and not a glutton; he should choose his broadcast fare with discrimination, and when the time comes give himself deliberately to the enjoyment of it."²⁹¹ Such 'intelligent' listening, it was suggested, would prevent listeners from becoming tired of unsuitable programmes.

Criticism came from a minority of dissatisfied listeners, but most licence-holders appreciated 4QG's programmes. Transmissions from the station reached a much greater area than Queensland or even Australia. Robinson arranged in March 1926 for listeners in the United States to report on the reception of 4QG programmes.²⁹² The *Worker* reported in

²⁹¹Page 95.

²⁹²*Worker*, 18 Mar. 1926, p. 8

1926 that "[w]ireless enthusiasts from Ocean Island and the New Hebrides have signalled to Robinson that they have heard last Sunday's band concert with remarkable clearness, and their cry is: 'Give us more!'"²⁹³

During the permanent station's preliminary testing period, the QRS was inundated with telegraphs from "all over Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand" from listeners who picked up the station.²⁹⁴ A radiogram from Samarai, New Guinea, read: "'Congratulations maximum strength here.'" A listener in Burnie, Tasmania, reported: "reception at unbearable strength." A Charters Towers report stated that "loud speaker results were being secured with two valves, and that using four, the volume was terrific." A cable from St. Kilda, Melbourne, read: "Please replace my loud speaker wrecked by your tornado, or I shall sue for damages." Fortunately the listener was not serious about his threat.

The QRS received a cablegram in 1926 from Christchurch, New Zealand, describing 4QG's reception. It read: "Three valves distinct all over the house." In Queensland, 4QG transmissions were received "right up the coast from Brisbane to Cairns." Robinson said in 1926 that "[r]eports from northern and inland portions of Queensland indicate that the programmes from the main station are being received with good volume on cheap sets."²⁹⁵ One listener in Melbourne claimed to have heard the station on his crystal set; and at Nowra, NSW, a listener reported that "without the use of radio frequency amplifying valves he received 4QG at tremendous strength." Such comments from satisfied listeners more than compensated for 4QG's 'bad press.'

²⁹³*Ibid*

²⁹⁴WW, 26 Mar. 1926, p.27. All following quotes in this paragraph and the next are from this source unless otherwise noted.

²⁹⁵Letter, 15 May 1926

In May 1926 the *Queensland Radio News* and the *Worker* noted that a listener in Wrangell, Alaska, had picked up 4QG broadcasts. He said,

I enjoyed your programme very much on Wednesday, March 24, between 12 and 3 a.m., especially the following features: Lecture on farming, and songs by Mr. J. Caldwell. Reception was good and clear. Your orchestra was a treat, quite a change from so much jazz that we receive here.²⁹⁶

4QG was also received in Japan and Canada. In 1928, *Wireless Weekly* published a letter from an admiring listener in Bamfield, British Columbia, Canada. He said,

... In spite of the poor conditions generally this winter, the main point is that 4QG has pushed through every night for well over a year - a record, considering the distance, that any station could be proud of.²⁹⁷

4QG broadcasts evidently reached a much wider area than the 500 mile radius for which licences were required. Judging from comments made by listeners, it seems that most derived their pleasure from receiving signals rather than programmes when the station commenced broadcasting. However, listeners from other countries appreciated the variety and the difference in 4QG's programmes, in comparison to their own. By mid-1926 many listeners had adopted primary interests in programmes, leaving the amateur experimenters to maintain the original romance of wireless technology.

²⁹⁶*QRN*, 1 May, 1926, p.45; *Worker*, 5 May, 1926, p.8

²⁹⁷*WW*, 6 April, 1928, p.19

Epilogue

This dissertation is effectively the story of the Queensland Radio Service. It documents its history from 1925 to 1930. 4QG, the station set up by the QRS, was a novel and unique experiment in broadcasting. It was the only station in Australia to be owned and operated by a State Government. Until the Australian Broadcasting Commission was created in 1932, 4QG was the only Australian station administered by the public service (excepting 6WF, which was taken over by the PMG's Department in December 1928 due to the station's enormous financial losses²⁹⁸). The station was also one of the nation's most elaborate and heavily-funded stations, providing what at the time was an excellent programme service on a powerful transmission strength.

In operation under the QRS, 4QG can be described as a combination of today's national and commercial stations. It accepted advertising and programme sponsorship to support its licence fee revenue. The later experience of Australian broadcasting is antithetic: national stations were forced in 1932 to rely solely on licence fee revenue, and commercial stations survived largely on advertising revenue. Yet, as this dissertation has demonstrated, the later experience was not natural, nor was it always the case. At the present time, national stations do not accept advertising or sponsorship, but in the future they may well return to these to complement federal grants, as was the case with 4QG and state grants.

4QG was conceived from a doctrine of utilitarianism circulating in Queensland Labor Government ideology. Another important impetus

²⁹⁸Counihan 1981: 186.

for setting up the station was Labor's commitment to regional and northern development in the state. This commitment was championed by E.G. Theodore (Premier of Queensland from October 1919 to February 1925). It was during his term of office that the QRS was planned and brought into existence. The recruitment of John Robinson as Director of the QRS also had a powerful effect in moulding policy and dictating practice at the station. The dissertation discusses several ambitious and innovative plans devised by Robinson, such as the Community Radio Service and the 'B' station proposal for Rockhampton. While they did not all eventuate, it is important to realise their potential, and the influence of prominent individuals, in the context of the broadcasting industry of the 1920s.

Far from being the primitive or embryonic stages of its 'true' birth in 1932, radio in the 1920s was a dynamic and mature cultural industry. The dissertation reveals that the QRS, as owner of an 'A' class licence, was given a 'B' class licence to open a second station. This supports the argument that the so-called 'dual' system of separate national and commercial stations did not have its roots in the PMG's 1924 scheme of 'A' and 'B' stations.

From 1925 to 1930, the QRS controlled both programming and technical functions of 4QG's service. When control was transferred to the Australian Broadcasting Company in January 1930, the PMG's Department assumed control of technical facilities, and the Company organised programming. The 4QG licence was transferred to the Australian Broadcasting Commission in July 1932. Today the station is owned by the Commission's successor, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, and bears little resemblance to its original structure.

Brisbane has two national stations: 4QG and 4QR. The latter has a strong local identity, but 4QG is now the Corporation's Brisbane station on the Radio National network, and has far weaker links with the local community. In terms of organisational structure and revenue sources, 4QG has undergone fundamental changes. In the variety of programme genres and use of local content, the station today is quite different from the one administered by the QRS.

Appendix One

List of archival papers relating to the Queensland Radio Service, filed in the Premier's Department files at the Queensland State Archives. The number in the left-hand column denotes QSA bundle numbers; the numbers in the second column refer to Premier's Department file numbers.

A/6280	80/1	Accounts
	80/2	Aeolian Co. Ltd
	80/3	Aeolian Rolls and Records - Taken
	80/4	Aeolian Rolls and Records - Returned
	80/5	Agreements
	80/6	Council of Agriculture
	80/7	Agriculture Dept
	80/8	Archdall, Miss C.H.
	80/9	Amalgamated Wireless (Australasia) Ltd
A/6281	80/10	AWA - Shipment of Gear - Big Station 4QG
	80/11	AWA - Station Supplies
	80/12	AWA - Shipment of Gear - Temporary Station
	80/13	AWA - Tenders
	80/14	AWA - E.A. Hooke
	80/15	AWA - Temporary Station
	80/16	AWA - Federal Agreement
	80/17	AWA - Supplies for Trading
	80/18	AWA - J.G. Reed
	80/19	AWA - Small Transmitting Apparatus
	80/20	AWA - Licenses and Agreements
	80/21	AWA - Rebroadcasting Chicago "Tribune"
	80/22	AWA - Royalty
	80/23	AWA - Accounts
	80/24	AWA - Microphones
	80/25	Agreement - Atlas Press
	80/26	Australian General Electric Co. Ltd
A/6282	81/1	Bardin, W.

81/2 Bauer, A.T.
81/3 Casual Labour at Big Station
81/4 Big Station Schedule
81/5 Broadcasters Sydney Ltd - Case for Commission
81/6 Broadcasters Sydney Ltd - Copyright
81/7 Bungeworgorai Test
81/8 Chief Secretary's Office - Under Secretary
81/9 Cleaners, Lift Attendants, etc.

A/6283 81/10 Copyright
81/11 Copyright Agreements
81/12 Copyright Statements
81/13 Employment
81/14 Establishment

A/6284 82/1 Establishment - Preliminary Reports
82/2 Estimates 1929-30
82/3 Federal Band
82/4 Gillies, Hon. W.N., M.L.A.
82/5 Government Printer
82/6 Grading of Apparatus
82/7 Handing Over - Australian Broadcasting Co. Ltd
82/8 Handing Over - Commonwealth Government
82/9 Home Secretary's Office
82/10 Humphreys, H.
82/11 Income Tax Prosecutions
82/12 Jackson, A.C.

A/6285 82/13 Lease of 4QG Premises by Commonwealth
82/14 License Fees and Statistics
82/15 McCallum, H. Scott
82/16 McCarthy, Leo Patrick
82/17 Macgregor, L.R.
82/18 McIntosh, Raymond
82/19 Main Roads Commission
82/20 Moran, C.
82/21 Musician's Award

- A/6286 83/1 National Broadcasting Scheme
 83/2 News, etc.
 83/3 Oxford, H.A.
 83/4 PMG's Dept - Application for Transmission Lines
 83/5 PMG's Dept - The Chief Inspector
 83/6 PMG's Dept - Complaints
 83/7 PMG's Dept - Co-ordination
 83/8 PMG's Dept - Deputy Director
 83/9 PMG's Dept - J. Malone
 83/10 PMG's Dept - Secretary - General
- A/6287 83/11 PMG's Dept - Secretary - Licences
 83/12 Premier
 83/13 Prime Minister's Dept
 83/14 Profit & Loss Account & Balance Sheet 1926-27
 83/15 Public Instruction Dept
 83/16 Public Service Commissioner
 83/17 Public Works Dept - General
 83/18 Public Works Dept - Goods Supplied
 83/19 Public Works Dept - Station Work
 83/20 Radio [periodical]
 83/21 Radio Broadcasting Co. of New Zealand Ltd
 83/22 Radio Communication Co.
 83/23 Radio Exhibition
 83/24 Radio and Electrical Exhibition - Applications
 83/25 Radio and Electrical Exhibition - Children's Tickets
 83/26 Radio and Electrical Exhibition - Programmes
 83/27 Radio Inspector
 83/28 Radio Inspector - Licenses
 83/29 Railway Dept
- A/6288 84/1 Registrar-General's Office
 84/2 Relay Stations
 84/3 Reports on Transmission
 84/4 Rockhampton Radio Club
 84/5 Royal Commission
 84/6 Sheil, L.L.
 84/7 Specification for Proposed Broadcasting Station

- 84/8 Staff
- 84/9 Staff Memos

- A/6289 84/10 General Staff Rules and Procedures
- 84/11 State Insurance Office
- 84/12 State Stores
- 84/13 Stephenson, C.W.
- 84/14 Stevens, F.W.
- 84/15 Superannuation Fund
- 84/16 Surveyor General
- 84/17 Tasmanian Broadcasters Pty Ltd
- 84/18 Telephone and Electrical Supplies Co.
- 84/19 Temporary Station - Establishment
- 84/20 Toowoomba Tests
- 84/21 Trading - Accounts
- 84/22 Trading - Radio Information Bureau - Establishment
- 84/23 Treasury
- 84/24 Visitors
- 84/25 Western Electric Co.
- 84/26 Inquiries re Wireless Sets
- 84/27 Working Procedure

- A/6311 96/1 Auditor General
- 96/2 Australian Broadcasting Co. Ltd
- 96/3 Estimates 1925-26
- 96/4 Inquiries re License Fees
- 96/5 City Electric Light
- 96/6 Crown Solicitor
- 96/7 Log of Advertisements [27 July 1925 - 30 June 1928]
- 96/8 Queensland University
- 96/9 PMG's Dept - Chief Manager
- 96/10 PMG's Dept - Telephones - Office
- 96/11 PMG's Dept - Terminal Strips
- 96/12 Public Works Dept - Temporary Station
- 96/13 Royalty Statements
- 96/14 Station 4QG License
- 96/15 Estimates 1928-29
- 96/16 Estimates 1926-27

96/17 Estimates 1927-28

96/18 Capital Accounts

96/19 Acoustics

PRE A/884 Premier's Department In-letters

Appendix Two

Chronological table of the establishment of medium frequency broadcasting stations in Australia from the inception of the sealed set scheme to January, 1930 (adapted from Walker, R.R. (1973), *The Magic Spark*, pp. 168-170):

Date:	Call sign:	Location:	Details ¹
13 Nov. 23	2SB/2BL	Sydney (NSW)	Sealed set; Broadcasters (Sydney) Ltd.
15 Dec. 23	2FC	Sydney (NSW)	Sealed set; Farmer & Co.
26 Jan. 24	3AR	Melbourne (Vic)	Sealed set; Associated Radio Co.
4 Jun. 24	6WF	Perth (WA)	Sealed set; Westralian Farmers Ltd
13 Oct. 24	3LO	Melbourne (Vic)	'A' license; Broadcasting Co. of Australia
7 Nov. 24	2BE	Sydney (NSW)	'B' license; Burgin Electric Co.
20 Nov. 24	5CL	Adelaide (SA)	'A' license; Central Broadcasters Ltd
1 Dec. 24	3WR	Wangaratta (Vic)	'B' license; Wangaratta Sports Depot ²
17 Dec. 24	7ZL	Hobart (Tas)	'A' license; Associated Radio Co.
26 Jan. 25	2UE	Sydney (NSW)	'B' license; Electric Utilities Supply
27 Jan. 25	2HD	Newcastle (NSW)	'B' license; Mr H.A. Douglas
13 Feb. 25	2UW	Sydney (NSW)	'B' license; Mr O. Sandel
24 Feb. 25	5DN	Adelaide (SA)	'B' license; 5DN Pty Ltd
8 Mar. 25	3UZ	Melbourne (Vic)	'B' license; Oliver J. Nilsen & Co.
27 Jul. 25	4QG	Brisbane (Qld)	'A' license; State Government
9 Aug. 25	4GR	Toowoomba (Qld)	'B' license; Gold Radio Electric Service
31 Oct. 25	2KY	Sydney (NSW)	'B' license; NSW Trades and Labor Council
11 Nov. 25	2MK	Bathurst (NSW)	'B' license; Mokler Bros
23 Aug. 26	2GB	Sydney (NSW)	'B' license; Theosophical Broadcasting Station Pty Ltd
21 Feb. 27	3DB	Melbourne (Vic)	'B' license; Druleigh Business and Technical College Pty Ltd
25 Mar. 27	5KA	Adelaide (SA)	'B' license; Sport Radio Broadcasting Co. Ltd

(The next station to be opened was 2CZ, Lismore (NSW), on 1 May 1930.)

¹ Scheme/class under which the station commenced broadcasting; original owner of station.

² Ceased on 22 Dec. 1925.

Appendix Three

Queensland Radio Service staff

J.W. Robinson was appointed to the QRS on 1 January 1925, but swiftly recruited staff to assist him in administrative, technical and programming capacities. The temporary station employed an accountant, secretary, typist, chief engineer, assistant engineer, cadet operator, announcer and musical director.³ The public service officially employed Robinson's staff. However, his staff usually worked comparatively long hours, including weekends, and were granted special holiday leave. Most staff moved to the QRS from other State Government Departments. For example, Norman Cooling, the announcer, was a Public Works Department architect; he maintained both jobs until his death in August 1927.⁴ His ten-year-old daughter performed musical items for the station.

The administrative staff were responsible for policy, accounts, correspondence and telephone inquiries, publicity, and for keeping copyright and advertising records. Staff analysed each previous day's programmes and compiled lists of musical items to be sent to the Australasian Performing Rights Association for royalties to be calculated. They auditioned and catalogued prospective live artists; recorded information included formal qualifications, lists of musical works they were able to perform and copyright ownership details of these works. By 1930 4QG had listed over 3000 local artists.⁵ Administrative staff also compiled programme schedules several weeks in advance and distributed

³ *QRN*, 1 Feb. 1926, p. 44. Their names were, in order, Mr L.L. Shiel, Mr F.W. Stevens, Mr W.F. Barden, Mr N.A. Cooling, Mr H.S. MacCallum, Mr C. Moran, Miss M.E. MacFarlane and Miss C.H. Archdall.

⁴ *QRN*, 3 (8), p. 16.

⁵ *Souvenir 4QG 1925 - 1930*, p. 11.

them to newspapers and periodicals throughout Australia and New Zealand.

Technical staff managed the station's transmitting equipment. As noted above, AWA provided the transmitting plant and additional equipment for the station, but Robinson (himself a graduate radio engineer of the Marconi School of Wireless in Sydney) requested his own engineers to manage it. F.W. Stevens and second engineer R.E. McIntosh were trained at southern stations,⁶ but Robinson appointed and trained the remainder in Brisbane. According to 4QG publicity, by its official opening the station "was able to boast of a skilled staff second to none in Australia."⁷ This was no idle boast: Michael Counihan notes that 4QG "was widely acknowledged as having both the best transmission in the country and a singularly efficient station management," and that "[a] number of Victorian country listeners appearing before the Royal Commission said that they received 4QG more clearly than 3LO's own tests."⁸ This may have been the result of Robinson's decision to secure a low wavelength. Stevens claimed in 1927 that only one member of the technical staff was over 30 years old; this was typical of 4QG and of Australian broadcasting stations in general. Organising outside broadcasts and laying the necessary landlines was another important role of the station's technical staff.⁹ When the Australian Broadcasting Company took over 4QG in 1930, technical control was surrendered to the

⁶ *QRN*, 1 Mar. 1926, p. 26. Stevens had worked at 3LO,a and with Robinson at 2FC (see Appendix 3); McIntosh, a "well known Sydney transmitting expert," had worked at 2BL.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁸ Counihan 1981: 185 (text and footnote 42).

⁹ A seven-page transcript entitled "Station 4.Q.G. Instructions for Operating and Maintaining the Radio Transmitter and Associated Apparatus" is held in a box labelled 'Radio History' at the Post Office Museum, General Post Office, Brisbane.

PMG's Department, and the original technical staff were quickly replaced by PMG staff.¹⁰

Programming staff were responsible for 4QG's software: the material that was broadcast to listeners. These included announcers, the market officer, children's programme hosts, the musical director and accompanists. Their roles are discussed at length in chapters two and three.

By the end of 1927 the QRS employed 21 staff.¹¹ These were Robinson (Director), Stevens (Chief Engineer and Deputy Director), R.E. McIntosh, W.F. Bardin and A.C. Jackson (Engineers), C.W. Stephenson (Operator), C.D. Moran and H. Oxford (Cadet Operators), L. McCarthy (Messenger), L.L. Shiel (Accountant), M.E. MacFarlane and C.H. Archdall (typists), P. McAuliffe, E. McLennan and J. Tyson (Bedtime Story staff), H. Scott MacCallum (Musical Director), A. Sharman and H. Woolmer (Accompanists), C.V. Woodland (Announcer) and R. Wight (Markets Officer). When the Australian Broadcasting Company assumed control of the station in January 1930, the station's staff was roughly the same size.¹²

¹⁰ Author's interview with W.C. Rohde, 21 Mar. 1990. Mr Rohde was a PMG's Dept employee who started work at 4QG in 1930.

¹¹ The QGG, No. 60, 1 Sep. 1927, p. 10, lists only 15 employees.

¹² The QGG, No. 80, 14 Oct. 1930, p. 10, lists 16 employees.

Appendix Four

Biographical profiles of Robinson and Stevens, the two most senior staff members of the QRS:

J.W. ROBINSON

John William Robinson was born in West Hartlepool, England, in 1895. He was educated locally, and upon leaving school migrated to Australia with his family to join his father, a mercantile marine officer in the Australian coastal trade.

In 1913 Robinson joined the literary staff of the *Sydney Morning Herald* as a cadet journalist, remaining with that paper until 1922. In 1915 he enlisted for war service, serving overseas with the AIF and rejoining the *Herald* staff towards the end of 1916. In 1918 he became the *Herald's* Newcastle manager, and in 1919 was promoted to the position of Senior Journalist and returned to Sydney to take on the position of financial editor for three months.

While at school Robinson undertook his first experiments with wireless, picking up signals by means of the Branly coherer. After leaving school his interest in wireless continued, despite embarking on a career in press journalism. This interest led him into part-time study of radio. Deciding that newspaper journalism as applied to the new medium would be very promising, Robinson enrolled in the full course offered at the Marconi School of Wireless in Sydney. For some time he combined daytime work at the *Herald* with night classes at the Marconi School.

In 1921, while still with the *Herald*, he was appointed as one of the Federal Government's first Honorary Radio Inspectors. When the Sydney department store Farmer and Company established Australia's

first large radio station, 2FC, on the roof of their building, Robinson indicated immediate interest. Having graduated from the Marconi School, he was appointed Assistant Manager at 2FC and became responsible for organising the station's news and utility sessions.

While serving as Radio Inspector, Robinson had developed a friendship with Jim Malone, who later became the Melbourne-based National Radio Inspector. F.W. Stevens (later Chief Engineer at 4QG), Malone and Robinson shared similar notions of what radio broadcasting should entail. They were of the firm belief that the medium could only be successfully developed if it became a public utility and was placed under the sole control of government.

When the Queensland Labor Government of E.G. Theodore outlined plans for a State monopoly broadcasting station, Robinson applied for a senior position. He was appointed as Manager (later Director, in keeping with other State Government Departments), and given the task of establishing the only broadcasting station in the northern state.

He set about doing this with great delight, and the Government allowed him great freedom. He was responsible for designing the station, supervising its construction, training staff, organising programming and arranging the many musical and vocal entertainments.

The QRS represented the fulfilment of Robinson's dreams, and the station's considerable success was largely due to his excellent management. He worked very long hours, including weekends, but was provided with a motor car and allowed extra holidays.

When 4QG became part of the Australian Broadcasting Company in January 1930, Robinson was reappointed Manager for Queensland, and continued in this position when the Company became a Commission in 1932. Robinson wrote a textbook for radio enthusiasts in 1926, which sold

very well, according to the *Queensland Radio News*, Monday 2nd August 1926, p. 14. He also wrote a smaller book entitled *Wireless and the Settler*.

Biographical notes on Robinson from ABC Archives conclude thus: "While notable as a pioneer of radio, Robinson did not expand with the times and in 1934 resigned from the ABC to edit a (weekly) wireless journal." However, a private letter from Dr C.B. Christesen states that Robinson was having "an affair" with his secretary, and when Major Conder of the Australian Broadcasting Commission arrived unexpectedly one morning from Sydney, he "sacked him on the spot."¹³

F.W. STEVENS:

F.W. Stevens was appointed as Chief Engineer at 4QG in 1925. His interest in wireless began in 1901, when he was three years old. He recalled an incident when the Duke of York (later King George V) visited Australia. Stevens lived at the Point Lonsdale Lighthouse, Port Phillip Heads. Wishing to welcome the visitors in a novel way, "a small set of apparatus was erected at the Signal Station at Point Lonsdale ... and an aerial was swung from the flag pole ... it was not until the steamer's smoke was dimly visible in the distance that communication was established between ship and shore."¹⁴ How influential this early experience really proved is a matter for conjecture.

Stevens commenced his career with the PMG's Department in Melbourne prior to the commencement of World War I. During the war he was unable to enlist, but since he had studied wireless, the Naval

¹³ Letter to the author, 17 Sep. 1990. Other information on Robinson above came from *Souvenir 4QG 1925-1930*.

¹⁴ *QRN*, 2 May 1927, p. 43.

Transport Corps accepted him for service. From there he was transferred to the Royal Australian Naval Radio Service and was based at Samarai in New Guinea. Upon returning to Australia he was attached to the Melbourne Coastal Radio Station. In 1921 he and two others spent six months alone manning the Willis Island Meteorological and Wireless Station.

Stevens joined Farmer and Company's Sydney station, 2FC, when it commenced operations in December 1923. He was transferred to Melbourne's 3LO when it opened the following year. At both stations he oversaw the technical operations of the studios. According to Robinson, much of the success which attended 2FC transmissions was due to his efforts. He joined 4QG when it opened and was still with the station when it was taken over by the Australian Broadcasting Company in 1930.

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¹⁵ Unofficial, covering the period from Jan. 1925 to Jun. 1926.

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